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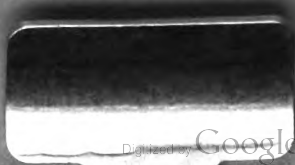
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THE
LIFE
OF
ST. FRANCIS OF SALES,
BISHOP AND PRINCE OF GENEVA,
FOUNDER OF THE ORDER
OF THE
VISITATION.

TRANSLATED FROM THE ORIGINAL FRENCH OF

M. DE MARSOLLIER,

DEAN OF THE CATHEDRAL OF USES.

By the Rev. WILLIAM HENRY COOMBES, D. D.
Author of SACRED ELOQUENCE.

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THE LIFE

OF

Saint Francis of Sales.

BOOK V.

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THE LIFE
OF
SAINT FRANCIS OF SALES,
BISHOP AND PRINCE
OF GENEVA.

BOOK THE FIFTH.

WHILE Francis was fully intent on God alone in his retreat, the Countess his mother, spared no pains to give every species of solemnity to the ceremony of his consecration. For this purpose she selected the church of Thorens, a considerable and populous village, belonging to the house of Sales, both on account of the beauty and largeness of the structure, as well as the small distance from the castle.

In the year one thousand six hundred and two, on the eighth of December, the day fixed for this grand ceremony, Francis was consecrated in the presence of an immense concourse of people, who had appeared in crowds from Annecy and the

neighbouring places, and of the most distinguished persons of Savoy, who had proceeded thither to shew their respect. During the whole of the ceremony, Francis discovered the most tender and affecting piety, and seemed impressed with extatic devotion.* The historians of his life relate, that he experienced something similar to that, which St. Paul records of himself, when he was elevated to the third heaven. The impression, which divine grace made on his heart, was so visible, that the Bishops who ascribed the appearance to indisposition, and were apprehensive that he would faint, offered to shorten the ceremonies. But he begged them not to omit any part, observing that the Church had not ordained any thing that was useless, or to which God had not annexed some peculiar blessing.

Francis, after his consecration, considered himself as a man dead to the world, who had to live only for God and the Church. He devoted his whole attention to the duties of his ministry; or if a regard to decorum, or to his family appeared ever to divert him from his charge, he returned to his duties with redoubled fervour; and seemed only to interrupt his pursuits, in

* Aug. of Sales. Book V. Anon. Book II.

order to resume them with increased zeal and alacrity. Thus, after the departure of the Bishops who had performed the ceremony of his consecration, he returned to a species of retreat, to adjust whatever he should have to accomplish on his arrival at Annecy.* In the mean time he dispatched his cousin Lewis of Sales, to take possession in his name of his Church, and to communicate to the chapter the circumstance of his consecration. He proceeded himself some days after to Annecy, accompanied by some persons of quality, who were eager to honour his entrance. He was received with singular honours and very general satisfaction; the people in crowds uttered incessant praises to God, for having given them a pastor according to His own heart, and so well calculated to sanctify the flock, entrusted to his charge.

† On the following day, the third Sunday of advent, he ascended the pulpit to proclaim to his people the birth of our Redeemer, and to give them all necessary instructions to receive Him. He afterwards appointed the different officers, who were necessary for him in the government of his diocese, and assigned to them salaries, that

* Aug. of Sales. Book V. † Ibid.

they might not be burdensome to his people, and that they might be enabled, with promptitude and disinterestedness, to attend to those, who might have business in the Ecclesiastical court. He eagerly desired, that such business should be gratuitously transacted; but as his slender income did not admit that plan, he contented himself with reducing the fees of office, to such a degree, as not to prove a burden to his people. He observed on this subject, that it was highly expedient, as far as circumstances would permit, to give gratuitously, what had been gratuitously received; and that Ecclesiastics, and particularly Bishops, could not avoid with too much care all suspicion of avarice and attention to interest; he added, that the profit, which arose from favours and dispensations, facilitated the grant, to the ruin of Ecclesiastical discipline; that when nothing was to be gained, there existed no temptation to relax the established order.

* At the same time, he received intelligence, that the Duke of Savoy had secretly passed the Alps, and that he was in the diocess of Geneva, though the precise situation was not ascertained. Francis had no doubt, that some great design

* Spond. Hist. of Geneva. Book III.

was in contemplation ; and a few days after, he was informed, that the Duke had nearly surprised Geneva ; that he had ordered the walls of that city to be scaled in the night of the twenty-second of December ;* that he had in person, at the head of some of his best troops, forwarded the enterprise ; but that his men had been repulsed, and that, as there was no probability of making an open attack with any effect, he had returned to Turin as rapidly as he had approached to Geneva.

This great plan, thus frustrated, excited for some time the attention of all Europe. As the subject was one day started in the presence of the holy prelate, some one observed to him, that if the enterprise had been crowned with success, he would no longer have been called the poor Bishop of Geneva, and that the Duke would not have failed to restore to him all the temporal possessions, once in the occupation of his predecessors. "Say rather," replied Francis, "What certainly is more important than the restitution of the effects enjoyed by my predecessors, that he would have re-established the Catholic religion in this celebrated city." He added, that violence and usur-

* 1602.

pation had never been considered a legitimate title to the possession of another's effects; that however, if the final arrangement of affairs depended on him, he should be satisfied with gaining the souls of his flock, and would be willing to make a very easy composition respecting the Ecclesiastical property. This answer gave the greater edification, as there was a general conviction, that he spoke the sentiments of his heart, and that he was undoubtedly ready to surrender not only his property, but his life, for the salvation of his people.

* In the mean time, as he was persuaded, that nothing contributed more to the re-establishment of morality than the instruction of youth, he gave orders, that at Annecy, and in the whole of his diocess, public catechism should be given on all Sundays and Festivals; and that the catechisms of the council of Trent and of Cardinal Bellarmin should be taught, in order to maintain in all places the most perfect uniformity of doctrine and instruction. To give a proof of his esteem for this duty, he thought proper in person to open the instruction, and ever after continued it, as long as his various occupations allowed him leisure.

* Aug. of Sales. Book V.

Thus this great prelate, whose learning excited astonishment at Rome and at Paris, whose eloquence raised applause at the court of France, was seen amidst a crowd of little children, accommodating his discourse to their capacity and weakness, and conveying his instructions with such patience and meekness as could not be sufficiently admired. His example was followed throughout his great diocese. No one ever after considered this employment as beneath his dignity, an impression which before had been but too common; and no pastor thought himself dispensed from doing in his parish, what he saw accomplished by the holy prelate in the capital. To give a decided proof of the estimation, in which he held this duty, whenever his occupations prevented him from discharging it in person, he committed the task to some of the dignitaries of his cathedral, or to some of the most distinguished among his clergy. Hence it happened that every one deemed it an obligation to assist at these instructions; the laity were not satisfied with sending their children; the aged and the learned appeared as well as the lowest of the people; and this conduct was usually styled, the method of learning the way to heaven. Indeed after a certain portion of time had been allotted to the instruction of the children, the holy prelate or his

substitute ascended the pulpit, and explained in an easy and familiar manner the leading points of Christian morality.

After establishing the catechetical lecture, Francis deliberated on the subject of making a general visitation of his diocess. It was now the depth of winter; and the season was so extremely severe, that the peasants of the most robust constitution scarcely left their homes. Those persons, whose situation obliged them to attend the holy prelate, could not hear without terror, the purpose which he had formed of undertaking so long and painful a journey; the extent of the diocess of Geneva, the passage over mountains almost inaccessible, and covered with perpetual snow, and tremendous masses of ice, from time immemorial, the poverty of the country, the mean accommodations, all these circumstances struck with alarm, persons of the most daring courage and the most inured to fatigue. Francis, a stranger to fear, when the duties of his situation called for his exertions, had the fortitude to propose to his council, the purpose which he had formed of commencing his visitation. He observed on that subject, that a Bishop could not acquire too soon a personal knowledge of his own diocess; that it was easy to make many mistakes

by depending on the information of others; that Jesus Christ the Bishop of our souls had taught him, that a pastor ought always to appear at the head of his flock; that he should have a personal acquaintance with his sheep, and accost them by name; that in this particular, He had made no distinction between times and seasons; that these poor people, whom Providence had in a manner banished to these dreadful mountains, were not less to be ranked in the number of his sheep, than the inhabitants of the towns; and that they had a stronger claim on his attention, as it was difficult to find able pastors, who had resolution to reside with them; that undoubtedly the season was severe; that however it was nearly of the same description as that which the son of God had chosen to come and visit mankind; that assuredly we were able to do for Him, in the flower of our years, that which He likened to us in all things, with the exception of sin, had been so merciful as to accomplish for us in the most tender period of infancy; that the accommodations would certainly be bad, if they were found worse than the stable of Bethlehem; that if difficulties excited alarms, His example should afford encouragement; that finally it was of little consequence, that he should live, but that it was

of the highest importance that he should do his duty.

As Francis was not one of those, who are impatient of contradiction, and as in asking an opinion he cheerfully received that advice which he solicited, those whom he consulted made no difficulty in opposing his plan. They said nothing in the first instance of the severity of the season, nor of the other difficulties, which were not calculated to alter his purpose. But they very rationally observed, that during his journey to the court of France, the diocess had undergone much alteration, of which it was expedient that he should obtain exact information, before he embarked in his proposed plan; that he would accomplish it with more effect, when he should have procured the desired information; that the habitual plan of his predecessor, before he began the visitation, was to obtain from the Archpriests and the rural Deans, exact relations of the state of the parishes within their dependencies; that these authorised documents contained, as far as facts could be known, an account of the dispositions of the pastors and of the people, of their morals, their occupations and their business; of the number of the parishioners, of the poor and of persons in easy circumstances; of the proportion

of those who gave scandal and of public sinners; of Catholics and of heretics; of the state of the buildings of the churches, of the hospitals, of the ornaments, and of all that regarded the divine service and the administration of the sacraments; that having received these accounts, he formed the plan of his visitation; that he framed and dictated his ordinances; that this order appeared so well established, that undoubtedly his Lordship would cheerfully adopt it; and that it was peculiarly necessary to procure these exact relations, as a correct judgment could not be formed from the old documents, since time always occasioned considerable alterations, which it was not possible to foresee.

They added, that if the severity of the season did not appear to him a sufficient reason, on his own account, to postpone his visitation to another time, he perhaps, would be disposed to shew a feeling regard to the inconvenience, which it would occasion to his diocese; that the priests of the neighbouring parishes, mostly poor and destitute of conveniences for travelling, and even the people, who had been accustomed to proceed to meet their Bishop, would not be able to perform this duty but at the imminent hazard of their lives; and that there were many parishes in the

mountains, which were rendered inaccessible by the snow and the ice; that these were obstacles, which God had raised to the execution of his design; and that in postponing it, he would only shew his submission to the orders of Providence.

This was the method of taking the holy Bishop by his weak side; his feeling for others was proportioned to the little attention he had for himself; and he could not take a resolution, which would be attended with the smallest inconvenience in his diocess. Besides he always paid the highest honour to the memory of his predecessor; he made it his glory to imitate him, and to adopt no change in what he had established; he approved the method, which he had observed, before he commenced his visitations; and as he believed, that too much firmness could not be shewn in enforcing ordinances once prescribed, he was equally convinced that too much precaution could not be taken, before they were issued. He therefore wrote himself to every part of his diocess, requiring as exact accounts as could be given of the state of the parishes; he recommended particularly, that care should be taken to inform him of the morals and capacity of those, who were candidates for holy orders; and he postponed his visitation to another period, when

with better information, he should be enabled to perform it with more effect.

In the mean time, he was engaged in regulating affairs at Annecy, and in the neighbourhood, and he began with his own house. He was not satisfied with executing what he had planned before his consecration; he added much which he believed would contribute to the public edification.* It is recorded, that a proposal was made to him to hire a woman of an age above suspicion to superintend the linen and the furniture; but he peremptorily rejected the proposition, with a declaration that he would not even accommodate his own mother with a lodging in the palace. The reason which he assigned, was the same as † St. Augustine, employed on a similar occasion; that he was convinced, that no person could blame him for living in the society of a mother of so distinguished a character as the Countess of Sales; but that perhaps the same observation could not be extended to those ladies, whose visits she might be obliged to receive. Indeed the Countess of Sales, who often frequented Annecy, never lodged in the palace; she always occupied a separate house. This was a point,

* Aug. of Sales. Book V. † Possid. Life of St. Aug.

to which he always adhered with inflexible firmness.

He shewed the same correctness of conduct with respect to ladies, who had to treat with him on any business. He never spoke to them but in public, or before a witness, who was directed to keep them in sight. As to useless visits of civility and even of decorum, he never admitted them as part of his plan. On that subject he observed, that a Bishop had no time to lose; and that, if he could find any leisure, it should not be squandered in the company of the female sex; that nothing was more injurious to the reputation of Ecclesiastics, than to frequent the society of ladies under whatever pretext; that idleness, which was always dangerous, was still more fatal, when they contributed to form the party. To this caution he always attended with scrupulous exactness. With this view, he recommended nothing with more earnestness to the Ecclesiastics of his diocess, than continual employment; and on many occasions he testified a wish, that the ancient discipline of the Church, which required all clergymen to learn some reputable trade, had been revived.* He added, that this rule was so

* 4th Council of Carthage can. 31 and 32.

general, that even the most learned, and those who were the most capable of employing their time in reading the sacred writings, were not exempted from its operation; and that the Church had been so convinced, that nothing was more dangerous to persons consecrated to God than idleness, that she had thought proper rather to allow them to cultivate the earth, than see them unemployed.* “Let clergymen,” says canon 31, “however skilled they may be in the word of God, learn some reputable trade, by which they may gain a livelihood.” “Let clergymen,” says canon 32, “gain a sufficiency to support and clothe themselves by some employment, or in cultivating the ground, without however neglecting their duties.”

He was himself an exact observer of the spirit of this discipline. He was always employed either in preaching, or in instructing, in prayer, in study, or in other episcopal duties. When he found any leisure, he went to the hospitals, or to private houses to visit the sick. He administered to them the sacraments, and sometimes did for them the meanest and most disgusting services. On many occasions God gave a blessing

* Ibid.

to his charity, by affording relief to the sick whom he visited, in a manner which appeared miraculous.

The affection and esteem, which his people entertained for him, could not be exceeded. When he passed through the city, which he always did on foot, every one was eager to leave his house to receive his benediction. Mothers in particular would bring their children, who shewed a froward and obstinate disposition, in order to obtain the advantage of his blessing; and it was often remarked, that by signing their foreheads with the sign of the cross, by placing his hand on their heads, or even by a flattering smile, their cries and tears would cease, and that they became more mild and manageable. The charity of the holy prelate proceeded farther; he often entered the houses of mechanics and of the poor; made himself acquainted with their wants; listened to their complaints, consoled and relieved them; into every quarter he carried peace; and as soon as he heard of any division in a family, he instantly proceeded thither, and never left the house, till he had re-established union. His incomparable meekness proved irresistible. Nothing could dispirit his charitable efforts; and he was

often known, by his invincible patience, to overcome the most inveterate enmity.

While Francis was employed in a manner so worthy of a holy Bishop, who by his character is the father of his people, the lent of the year one thousand six hundred and three approached. As he had determined to hold an ordination at that holy season for the first time, he relinquished all other occupations, to devote himself to that duty. He was convinced, that it is one of the most important functions of the episcopacy, and that nothing merits in a higher degree, the undivided application of a Bishop, than the concern of giving holy ministers to the Church; he considered the bad choice which he might be exposed to make in this particular, as the occasion of the most rigorous account which he should have to give to God. With this view, he redoubled his fasts and his prayers; and impressed with a fear of being deceived, and with a perfect distrust in that extreme mildness of character, which always led him to treat with condescension the infirmities of men, he said continually to God, from the bottom of his heart: "Make known to me, O Lord, those whom you yourself have chosen, that I may not admit into the number of your ministers those

whom you have rejected, and that I may not exclude those whom you have called."

Agreeably to these principles he shewed the greatest care in the choice of those, who appeared as candidates for holy orders; he examined them himself with extreme rigour. He paid no regard to birth, to recommendation, not even to distinguished talents when they were not supported by a holy life, or at least by irreproachable conduct in the eyes of men. He particularly examined their vocation; and could not endure that persons should be suffered to enter the Church with the profane and sacrilegious views of sordid interest. An instance of this nature occurred in his examination of a young man of rank, who had been provided with a considerable priory. The holy Bishop judged from his manner and deportment, that the revenues of the priory influenced his desire of being admitted to orders, more than any other consideration; he proposed to him so many questions on the subject, that the young man at length acknowledged, that he had no other vocation than the avarice of his parents, who were eager to increase their income by the addition of the benefice. Such an avowal was decisive; the holy prelate refused to admit him,

and in defiance of every solicitation, persisted in his refusal with unshaken firmness.

To the examination of capacity, he added that of morals. For this purpose he procured every sort of information, which could throw light on so important a point; and he used to say, that Ecclesiastics of irregular conduct occasioned more injury by bad example, than benefit by their doctrine. He however shewed more indulgence on this article, than on that of deficiency in talent. Ignorance was a perpetual exclusion; but as irregularity may be corrected, while ignorance generally admits no remedy, he contented himself with postponing for a time the ordination of such as manifested a want of correctness in their conduct, till they had afforded certain marks of reformation, conformable to the state, which they wished to embrace. The consequence of this extreme rigour was, that his ordinations were not numerous; and his firmness in this particular was greatly admired, as after the conversion of Chablais and the bailiwicks, his diocess laboured under a great want of priests. He was perfectly aware of the circumstance; and to all observations on the subject, he constantly replied, that the Church stood less in need of priests, than of good priests; that in time sufficient provision

might be made, and that the master of the vineyard was to be entreated to send workmen.

* An object, which would have gratified his wishes, was the establishment of a seminary at Annecy, for the purpose of forming young men at an early period of life to piety and learning, and to employ them in the ministry to instruct and edify the people. The smallness of his revenue and the poverty of his clergy prevented the execution of this design, and he retained this ineffectual desire till his death. He used to repeat his astonishment on this subject, that, while every religious order established a novitiate to instruct and form its candidates to the observance of the rule; while every art and profession required an apprenticeship, in which proofs of ability were to be given, the same precaution should not be demanded for the Ecclesiastical ministry, and the government of souls, the art of arts, and the most noble as well as the most difficult of all professions. He added that God had given him a great indifference for temporal possessions; that he was however obliged to acknowledge that they were not useless to the Church; that as there always existed too great a proportion of wealth in

* Aug. of Sales. Book V.

hands which misapplied it, so it was rare that those, who were disposed to employ it in good purposes, were furnished with adequate means; that he had often experienced an inability to provide for every call from a want of supplies; but that his great source of consolation was, that God would demand of him only an account of that, which He had given.

* A prelate so scrupulously nice in refusing to admit any to holy orders, but persons of acknowledged virtue and capacity, could not fail to display the greatest caution in conferring benefices. He could not endure the idea, that they should be bestowed on human considerations, or as rewards for services, often of a temporal nature, and sometimes connected with worldly intrigues. He called this infamous commerce, *the abomination in the holy place*, and one of the most fruitful sources of the disorders, which afflict the Church. To preclude all solicitation or misapprehension on this important subject; he never bestowed a benefice, to which the care of souls was annexed, without a competition; such situations were obtained by regular disputations, at which the holy prelate always presided, and in

* Anon. Book II.

which public proofs of talents were given, as in a contest for a chair of Theology. The most able candidate obtained the situation. Intrigue and solicitation had no influence; merit alone decided the superiority; an attempt to employ any other means would have occasioned the perpetual exclusion of a candidate. It was in one of these disputations, that he became acquainted with the splendid talents of Mr. de Fenouillet, who was afterwards one of the most celebrated preachers of his time, and one of the most distinguished prelates of the Church of France.

* To establish a perfect uniformity in the method of instructing and of administering the sacraments, he himself composed an excellent ritual, which will ever remain a lasting monument of his prudence, of his talents, and of that charitable condescension, which should be shewn to the wants of our neighbour.† The zeal of the holy Bishop was not satisfied with affording advice and direction in writing to the pastors of his diocese; he thought it his duty to supply them with oral instruction. For this purpose, he ordered, that every year a diocesan Synod should be held on a stated day, without any other previous

* Ibid. † Ibid.

ceremony of convocation. He spent this time in giving them instructions, on points relative to their duties; and he thought it not beneath his dignity to descend to the most minute details. The following are some of the principal regulations, which he made in the first Synod, held in the year one thousand six hundred and three.

* As the greatest dignity of the Christian priesthood arises from the power given by Christ to priests to consecrate the holy Eucharist, and as the most holy of their functions consists in offering the unbloody sacrifice, as Christ offered the bloody sacrifice of the cross, he eagerly desired, that a mystery so marked with love, and so calculated to unite man with God, should be honoured in a peculiar manner, in his diocess. He ordained with this view, that the office of the holy sacrament should be kept on all Thursdays of the year. But as purity of body and mind forms the best disposition, by which this tremendous sacrifice is to be honoured, he forbade all Ecclesiastics to keep in their service females of doubtful characters; and he took every possible precaution to remove from them every ground of suspicion. He made to his clergy many moving exhortations

* Ibid.

on this subject. As purity is not a virtue to be practised only by priests, but as all Christians are obliged to attend to its observance in their respective stations, he required of his pastors to bestow great attention on this object, and make an annual report to the Synod of the names of those who lived in a state of concubinage and adultery, if after due admonition, they had not reformed their conduct.

* Though it was a custom at that time to receive money for the administration of the sacrament of penance, he deemed it an abuse, and forbade it in future; he exhorted his clergy never to exact any thing for the other sacraments, but to be satisfied with that, which should be voluntarily offered. He obliged all those possessed of benefices to which the care of souls was annexed, to observe the duty of residence under the pain of deprivation; reserving to himself the examination of such reasons, as might justify a dispensation, as well as the right of allowing absence even of a short duration. He required strict modesty in dress, and in this particular he enforced the observance of the holy canons. He forbade the frequentation of taverns, all games of hazard, and

* Ibid.

indeed those of every description in public. He likewise prohibited the amusements of the chace, on account of the inconveniences, which might result from that exercise, as well as the loss of time, with which it would be inevitably attended. He established superintendants, whose duty it was to visit twice in the year the parishes assigned to their care; they were permitted to grant dispensations in matters of inferior moment; higher concerns were reserved to the Bishop. They likewise had authority to exhort and to punish such faults, as demanded immediate correction.

* Besides these regulations, he obliged the archpriests, to assemble three times in the year, the priests under their jurisdiction, to confer with them on the wants of the parishes, to give them proper information on the duties of their ministry, and to resolve the cases and difficult questions, which they might have to propose. He established monthly conferences; an exercise, which has been since practised in France with considerable effect; and it would be really desirable, that such an institution should be adopted in every diocess. The intercourse of Catholics with Calvinists induced him to assign as subjects

* Ibid.

of these conferences, various questions of controversy. The controversial writings of Cardinal Bellarmin, furnished objections and replies, and the decisions of this learned Jesuit were generally adopted. The holy Bishop remarked on this subject, that a pastor, who knows not how to defend his flock which is attacked by wolves, is ignorant of an essential part of his duty; that it was shameful, that a priest employed in the ministry should not be able to answer the objections of heretics, and that he should remain mute, and make no stand, while the Church of the living God was exposed to insult.

* The reader has already been enabled to remark the aversion of the holy prelate for legal proceedings, his firm conviction that they are extremely hurtful to charity, the foundation of all Christian virtue, and the care he took to prevent them even among the laity. It is easy to suppose, that he viewed them with additional horror, when he saw them prevail among Ecclesiastics. He accordingly exhorted them to avoid all suits, or to terminate their differences by arbitration; he offered his own services to adjust any disputes, that might be referred to him; and on many of

* Ibid.

these occasions he met with complete success. On this subject he often observed, that he could not sufficiently express his astonishment that matters of faith, of morality and salvation, subjects infinitely more important than those which daily produce lawsuits, should be submitted to the decision of Bishops and other learned Ecclesiastics, and that such reluctance should be discovered to recur to their interposition in differences, which arise from temporal concerns; that in truth they ought to be strangers to legal chicanery, which should be banished from the society of priests; that with the exception of this particular, there was scarcely a suit, which a man of sense might not adjust, if there existed a mutual disposition to promote conciliation and peace. His tender regard for the poor, increased the aversion, which an extreme mildness of character gave him for legal procedures; he was persuaded that they stopped the course of charitable donations, and that the money which was spent in maintaining them, was so much loss for such unfortunate objects, as subsist on the superfluous wealth of their neighbours. He could not bear, that the existence of depending suits should be alleged as a reason for declining the duty of alms deeds; he called that, an act of excusing one sin by

another, of washing in water, which increases the stain.

The profound esteem which he entertained for the priesthood of Jesus Christ, did not permit him to behold without grief, those who were invested with this character, employed in the service of the great, and generally engaged in business altogether unworthy of their profession. He considered them in this situation exposed to dangers, under which resistance was rendered extremely difficult ; and he used to say, that if such difficulty was found in persevering and in preserving the true spirit of so sublime a state, even in retirement and seclusion, this became almost impossible in the hurry of the world, where every object favours the passions, and every attack is directed against innocence. It was this consideration, that induced him, not to ordain any priest without a title, or at least without an employment in some church, which afforded a competent subsistence. He did not absolutely forbid the Ecclesiastics of his diocese to form any engagements with the great ; but his exhortations to that effect were extremely animated ; and he enforced them with so much assiduity and address, that at length he almost abolished the abuse. On that occasion he observed, that there was nothing however dif-

ficult in the way of virtue, which men might not be induced to perform, if avarice and ambition could be removed from their breasts.

* While Francis was thus employed in regulating his diocess, the festival of Easter approached; immediatly after the expiration of the holidays he departed for Turin to make to the Duke the acknowledgments usually paid by Bishops after their consecration. He was received at that court with all the esteem, which his reputation had acquired. Every one was eager to consult him; and the Duke himself had many conferences with him on the re-establishment of the Catholic religion in his diocess. His disinterested spirit was again displayed on this occasion. It was universally known, that he was poor, and the Prince was well aware of the circumstance; the estimation in which he held the prelate, and the confidence which he industriously shewed, seemed an inviting occasion to solicit a favour. This, however, agreeably to his usual practice, was forgotten. The holy Bishop remembered only the wants of the poor and of the Catholics recently converted, in favour of whom he obtained what he asked. Suggestions were

* Aug. of Sales. Book V.

made to him to think of himself, and to take advantage of the good will of the Duke; but he replied that he was not come for that purpose. Courts in general are not distinguished by the practice of virtue; the Bishop however, was treated with the highest esteem. The indifference of Francis for wealth was universally remarked with great feeling; and the Duke could not help observing, that by experience he had found such as made the best use of riches, to set on them the least value.

* As the journey to Turin was not the only motive, which had induced the holy prelate to pass the Alps, he left it some days after to pay a visit to the Bishop of Salucca. This was the father Juvenal Ancina, an oratorian who has been already mentioned. They had contracted a friendship at Rome, which they had after improved by an epistolary correspondence. It would have been difficult to find two men, who bore a more complete resemblance to each other. They were both distinguished by piety and knowledge; they both exhibited the same qualities of the mind and of the heart; the same simplicity, the same charity, the same mildness of character; an equal

* Aug. of Sales. Book V.

contempt for riches, and a similar application to the functions of their ministry. The Bishop of Salucca, like the Bishop of Geneva, lived with his people as a father among his children; and his people discovered for him all that tenderness and respect, which children can shew to a beloved parent. His love for the poor could not be exceeded; and he had often reduced himself to the extremity of want in his attempts to relieve them. If virtue and a similarity of disposition form the most solid foundation of friendship, we may judge of the nature of that intimacy, which subsisted between the Bishops of Salucca and of Geneva.

* Francis arrived at Salucca on the eve of the Invention of the Cross. As the Church celebrates on the same day the festival of St. Juvenal, the patron of the Bishop of Salucca, it was for that prelate an additional motive of devotion. He availed himself of the opportunity, to request the Bishop of Geneva, to give a sermon to his people. Francis complied with his request; and ascending the pulpit on the following day, he began in the Italian language an excellent discourse in praise of the Cross. After he had finished his introduc-

* Ibid.

tion, the Bishop of Salucca sent him word, that he might, if he pleased, proceed with his sermon in the French language; that the Marquisate of Salucca had been so long subject to France, and so lately ceded to the Duke of Savoy, that both languages were spoken with the same facility. The holy prelate therefore proceeded with his discourse in French, with a degree of piety and eloquence, which attracted universal admiration. He spent there some days to satisfy the earnest solicitations of his friend, and then took his leave, in order to perform his devotions at our Lady's of Mondovy, and returned to Annecy for the feast of Pentecost.

The festival of the holy sacrament, which was approaching, gave occasion to a difference between the chapter of the Cathedral and that of our Lady's at Annecy. The chapter of the Cathedral claimed a right of precedence at the procession, and on other occasions, before the chapter of our Lady's; and the canons of this latter Church contended on the other side, that they enjoyed a right, of which they were in possession, of presiding at all the Ecclesiastical ceremonies. It is true, they were in the enjoyment of this right, before the chapter of St. Peter's of Geneva had retired to Annecy; but from that period, the

Bishops and the chapter of the Cathedral had always contested the point. Francis on this occasion acted agreeably to the sentiments of his predecessors, and maintained that the chapter of the Cathedral ought to have the precedence. This declaration served only to inflame the dispute. The canons of our Lady's refused to submit to the decision; and alleged, that the Bishop, being a party in the dispute, could not be the judge. However as the festival approached, a temporary regulation became necessary; and Francis directed provisionally, that the chapter of the Cathedral should have the precedence. The canons of our Lady's refused to obey the injunction, and did not assist at the procession.

It is certain, that the Bishop of Geneva, possessed as he was of complete jurisdiction over the chapter of our Lady's, had a right to decide this question, and to compel the parties to submit to his decision; but the extreme mildness of his character, and his aversion for every sort of legal procedure, did not permit him to exert, on this occasion, the authority with which he was incontestably invested. He therefore adopted the expedient of accommodation, and induced the parties to consent, that letters should be written by both sides to Paris to the Duke of Nemours, the

Lord of Annecy, to request him to have the affair investigated, and to have the goodness to propose himself the best mode of terminating the difference. The Duke consulted on the subject the most able among the clergy, and in the parliament of Paris. The claim of the chapter of our Lady's to precedence before that of the Cathedral was judged untenable; and a proposal was made to regulate the order of the two chapters on the plan of the Collegiate Churches of the Holy Chapel and of St. Genevieve of Paris, when they proceed with the chapter of the Cathedral; that according to this method the chapter of the Cathedral of Geneva should occupy the right side, and that of our Lady's of Annecy the left.

Francis peremptorily rejected this proposition. He observed, that he had sworn to maintain the privileges and prerogatives of the clergy of his Cathedral; that he made it a duty religiously to observe the tenor of his oath; and that he would never suffer, that in his time the least infringement should take place; that the prerogative of his Cathedral did not only consist in not yielding the precedence to a Collegiate Church, but likewise in enjoying that precedence in every particular; that the Holy Chapel of Paris, and the Abbey of St. Genevieve were exempt from epis-

copal jurisdiction, and from that of the chapter, during the vacancy of the See; that as there was no dependence between these two Churches, no inconvenience arose from a species of equality, subsisting between them in processions; that the same observation could not be applied to the chapter of our Lady's of Annecy, which depended in every particular on the episcopal jurisdiction, and, in the vacancy of the See, on that of the chapter; that it was therefore not just to frame a regulation by the model of independent Churches; that an injury would thus be done to the superiority of the Cathedral, and that dangerous consequences might afterwards result from such a proceeding.

Francis wrote to this effect to the Duke of Nemours, and requested his permission not to accept the accommodation, which he had proposed. The Duke approved his reasons, and informed the chapter of our Lady's by letter, that they could not claim either precedence or equality, with respect to the chapter of St. Peter's of Geneva, and that he advised them to submit to the decision of their Bishop. This in effect was the only plan to be adopted; but when the spirit of litigation has once taken possession of a community, it is difficult to recover a tone of moderation. The chapter of our Lady's refused to

acquiesce either in the decision of the Bishop, or in the sentiments of the Duke of Nemours. They carried the affair before the Archbishop of Vienne, the Metropolitan of Geneva. Francis prosecuted the business, and at length obtained a decision, which confirmed his own, and gave the precedence on all occasions to the chapter of the Cathedral.

* Francis now feeling himself in the enjoyment of leisure, immediately resumed his design of performing the general visitation of his diocess; but he was diverted from his purpose, by a letter which the mayor and magistrates of Dijon wrote to him, requesting that he would preach the advent and the lent in their city. Francis, who had determined not to leave his diocess, except for the service of the Church in general, or for that of his own in particular, was going to decline the task. But God, to whose glory this journey was one day so much to contribute, did not permit him to adhere to his first ideas. He felt an interior impulse to comply with the request. Of this emotion he could discover no reason; on the contrary he said much to himself, that seemed sufficient to produce an opposite effect. Provi-

* Idem ibid.

dence concealed from his view the advantage, which was to be derived from this journey, but interiorly urged him to perform it. He followed the attraction; and replied, that as he was requested to leave his diocese, and the dominions of the Duke of Savoy, he could not do either one or the other without the permission of his Holiness and that of his Sovereign, that he would write to both, and communicate their answers. The Pope immediately granted the requested permission; but the Duke of Savoy under studied prettexts refused his consent to the journey. This refusal was not a subject of surprise to Francis; he had observed during his last journey to Turin, that the Duke, who was of a jealous temper, had taken offence at his first journey to France, at the esteem which the king had manifested for him, and still more at the offers which had been made. Francis, who possessed an insinuating address, spared no pains to discover the reason of his displeasure; but the Duke, who could not conceal his uneasiness, had at that time his reasons to disguise the motives of his conduct.

It was afterwards known, that, as Geneva stood conveniently situated for France, particularly since the exchange of the Marquisate of Salucca,

the Duke had entertained apprehensions, that a proposal might be made to Francis to treat concerning the rights of Sovereignty, which the Bishops of Geneva claim over that city, in order to urge them at a convenient season; that his Highness had believed, that Francis had been so noticed, when he was but coadjutor, only for the purpose of gaining him, and of inducing him to conclude the treaty, when he should succeed to the episcopal dignity; that he supposed by consequence the journey to Dijon to be only a pretext, and that it concealed some more important design. The excursion to Bresse made by the Duke de Bellegarde, Master of the Horse to his Christian Majesty, and governor of Bresse and of the countries exchanged for the Marquisate of Salucca, in company with the Baron of Luz and of the President Jannin, contributed to augment his suspicions; and this was the reason, which induced him to refuse Francis the permission, which he solicited.

The Duke of Savoy had a peculiar interest in any treaty which might be concluded on the subject, as he himself claimed the Sovereignty of Geneva, and treated the rights maintained by the Bishops, as imaginary and resting on no solid foundation. The course of this history so natu-

rally requires, that this celebrated question should be here discussed, that if such an object were neglected, something would be wanting to the satisfaction of the reader. The following therefore are briefly the reasons, alleged by the Duke and the Bishop, to support their claim to the Sovereignty of Geneva.

* The Dukes of Savoy, in order to support their claim, trace the affair to an ancient date, and suppose that in the year one thousand three hundred and ninety-two Peter, Count of Geneva, dying without issue, chose for his heir Humbert de Vilars, his sister's son; that Humbert in the year one thousand three hundred and ninety-five obtained from the Emperor Wenceslas an investiture of the county of Geneva; that he remained in the peaceable possession of it till the year one thousand four hundred, which was the last of his life; that having no children he disposed of his effects in favour of Odo de Vilars, his paternal uncle; that Odo without difficulty succeeded to the domains of his nephew, and sold them the following year to Lewis Count of Savoy. Such is the foundation on which the claims of Savoy ori-

* Monod, treatise of the right of Savoy to the Sovereignty of Geneva.

ginally rest. The Dukes add, that in virtue of this sale, which was made without opposition, Lewis of Savoy was long in peaceable possession of the county of Geneva; that when Savoy was erected into a Duchy by the Emperor Sigismond in favour of Amedeus VIII. a legal procedure was brought before the imperial chamber concerning the county of Geneva; that in consequence of this contest, the Emperor, in the year one thousand four hundred and twenty-four, gave a new investiture of this county to the Duke of Savoy; that it was confirmed by the Emperors Maximilian I. in the year one thousand five hundred and nineteen, and Charles V. in one thousand five hundred and thirty. The Dukes of Savoy farther allege, that in virtue of these titles, they have exercised without opposition every act of Sovereignty in Geneva; that they have established governors, judges, notaries and bailiffs; that they have placed guards at the gates and garrisoned the fortress; that they have always had there a seigneurial house; that they have coined money, and pardoned criminals who were condemned to death. The Dukes produce as the ultimate proof of the justice of their claim the following facts; that Peter de la Baume, bishop of Geneva, having thought proper in the year one thousand five hundred and fifteen, to claim the temporal jurisdiction of the city, Pope

Leo X. expressly forbade him to urge his claim by a brief dated the same year; and that the Bishop obeyed the injunction without justifying his pretended right to the Sovereignty of Geneva. Such is the foundation of the claims of the Dukes of Savoy to the temporal Lordship of Geneva.

* The Bishops of Geneva contend on the other side, that the claims of the Dukes of Savoy are founded only on an equivocal representation; that in truth they are Counts of Genevois; but that so far from possessing, in that capacity, any right over the city of Geneva and its liberties, they formerly depended on the Church of Geneva, and paid a suitable homage; that the treaty made between Arduce, the Bishop of Geneva, and Amé, Count of Genevois, conveys this information in express terms; that the following words form a part of that memorable deed;† *that the Count is to be a faithful advocate under the Bishop*; that the ancient Counts of Genevois having undertaken to withdraw themselves from their dependence on the Church of Geneva, and even to subject it to their jurisdiction, the same Arduce

* Frederic Spanheim. Spon. history of Geneva. Book II.

† Comes fidelis advocatus sub episcopo esse debet.
Spon. *ibid.*

made an appeal to the Emperor Barbarossa, who confirmed the temporal Lordship of Geneva to him, by an authentic declaration, dated in the year one thousand one hundred and fifty-three; that in defiance of a right so well established, the Count of Zeringuen, in quality of lieutenant of the Emperor, and the Count of Genevois, in the same capacity, having made an encroachment on the temporal Lordship of the Church of Geneva, the Bishop carried his complaints before the General Diet of the Empire; that the attempts of the two Counts were pronounced so contrary to justice, that the Diet obliged them to appear in person; gave them a severe reprimand for their audacity, and constrained them to sign the sentence of their own condemnation, with such additional rigour towards William Count of Genevois, that his son was consigned to Nantelin the Bishop of Geneva, as a reparation for the felony, which the father had committed against the prelate and his church. The Bishops of Geneva likewise produce a very ancient record, which is cited by Spanheim, and preserved by Spon.; it declares in express terms: *that the Church of Geneva possesses alone the domain and the Sovereignty of the city and the suburbs of Geneva.* To this deed they add two others, which are two acknowledgments issued by Amedeus Count of Genevois, by

which he disclaims any right or title to the city or to the property of the Bishopric of Geneva; they maintain that this fact is so notorious, that **Amedeus VIII.** the first Duke of Savoy, having obtained the county of Genevois, paid a solemn homage to the Bishop in the Cathedral Church of St. Peter; and that the Duke Lewis his son, disclaimed in particular all right to the Sovereignty of the territory acquired by the city of Geneva, near the bridge of Arvé.

As to the bull of **Leo X.** which has been mentioned, the Bishops acknowledge that it was issued; but they contend, that it cannot injure the rights of Sovereignty vested in the Bishops for two unanswerable reasons; the first is, that the Popes possess no temporal right over the domains of Geneva, and that **Leo X.** by consequence could not dispose of the Sovereignty in favour of the Dukes of Savoy to the prejudice of the Bishops; the second is, that though **Leo X.** should possess this right of disposing of the Sovereignty of Geneva, he could not condemn the Bishop without hearing his plea; and that it is notorious, that he had never been heard, not even cited. As to the acts of Sovereignty said to have been exercised in Geneva by the Dukes of Savoy, the Bishops in a great measure deny the facts, and as

for those instances which are authenticated, they maintain that they were the effects of violence, and had taken place in defiance of justice, when the superior power of the Dukes enabled them to profit by favourable conjunctures; and that as the Bishops and chapter had invariably opposed the claim, no right could ever be ensured to the Dukes of Savoy by those instances of irregular interposition. The Bishops finally add, that as it is an undeniable fact, that the Sovereignty of Geneva belonged to their Church, and that the Dukes of Savoy paid them homage as Counts of Genevois, as is proved by the authentic documents above referred to, it rests with the Dukes to prove, how the Church of Geneva lost this Sovereignty, and by what means they themselves acquired it; circumstances, which the Bishops declare can never be explained. Such are briefly the reasons, on which both sides establish their right; this is not the place to pronounce on this celebrated controversy; indeed such a sentence would exceed the boundaries of history.

It will be sufficient here to add, that the city of Geneva being formed into a republic, as it has been related in the beginning of the second book, alleged that the Sovereignty of Geneva belonged to the people; that the Bishops in the first in-

stance, and afterwards the Dukes of Savoy had usurped the supreme power; and that during these usurpations sufficient marks of the Sovereignty of the people had always been visible. The following are the proofs produced of this fact; to which we will add some reflections, that will contribute to throw light on the subject.

* The republic of Geneva maintains, that the Bishop even after his election, takes an oath to preserve the privileges and liberties of the city. But surely such an obligation no more destroys his claim to Sovereign authority, than the oath taken by the Emperor and most of the Kings of Europe, can be said to injure their respective titles. In the second place, say the republicans, the extreme deference shewn by the city to the Bishops and Dukes of Savoy, prevented a close inspection of treaties and other enterprises hostile to its liberty. But, it may be observed, this deference having lasted so many centuries without interruption, and without opposition to these supposed enterprises, furnishes an evident proof, that before the year one thousand five hundred and thirty-three, the inhabitants of Geneva did

* Spon. History of Geneva. Book II.

not possess those claims, which they boast at the present period. In the third place they assert, that the Emperor Frederick Barbarossa, was not competent to give either to the Dukes of Savoy, to the Counts of Genevois and of Zeringuen, or to the Bishops, the Sovereignty of an imperial town, like Geneva, without the participation of the Empire, and the consent of the people. However neither the Emperor, nor the inhabitants, ever complained that he had exceeded his powers; on the contrary, the general Diets of the Empire acknowledged the Sovereignty of the Bishops. In the fourth place, they contend, that during the plenitude of power, possessed by the Bishops and the Dukes of Savoy, sufficient vestiges of the Sovereignty of the people still remained. But it is not sufficient to make this assertion without proof. Fifthly, they add, that the Bishops never possessed more authority at Geneva, than the Doges at Venice and Genoa; and that the public proclamations were issued in the name of the Bishop, of the judge of his court, of the magistrates and of the leading men of the city. But the first part wants proof; and the second the Bishops' deny. In the sixth place, they assert that the Bishop had many assistant judges chosen by the city; and that an appeal lay from all his decisions to the

council of the Two Hundred, and even to a general council composed of the heads of families; and that the Bishop was obliged to ratify their resolves. But the question is not precisely to discover, whether the Bishop had any subaltern officers; but rather whether they depended on him, and whether he could depose and change them at pleasure. This the Bishops assert and prove by many examples; but the republicans produce but one instance only in support of the assertion, that the Bishops were obliged to ratify what had been resolved by the council of the Two Hundred, or the general council. In the seventh place it is asserted, that the magistrates had a right to coin money, and to guard the city without the interference of the Bishop. But the right of coining money has not on all occasions been inseparable from the Sovereign power. In France, the Dukes of Nevers and of Sully, possess this right; they have however never stated their claims to Sovereign authority. The right of guarding the city is a proof still more questionable; the cities of Lyons, of St. Malo, of Amiens, of Peronne, and of many others, are in possession of this prerogative, and are not less subject to the supreme power.

To these pretended proofs the partisans of the liberty of Geneva add, that the secular magis-

trates decided criminal suits in the last instance, when the culprits were not clergymen. But yet they have to prove, that these judges did not receive their powers from the Bishop; for this the Bishops affirm, and their assertion cannot be invalidated by any document.* It is remarkable, that the historian of Geneva acknowledges, that the Bishops had a right to pardon criminals, who were condemned to death; and surely this is an evident proof of Sovereignty. "But," says the historian, "they did it rather by Ecclesiastical and Episcopal, than by secular authority." However, it is apparent from all historical monuments, that Bishops never assumed the prerogative of granting pardon to criminals who were condemned to die, if they were not at once spiritual and temporal lords. From this acknowledgment, another consequence may be drawn, that the Bishops were not, as this historian in another place asserts, obliged to adopt the decisions of the councils of Geneva. The advocates of the republic farther allègue, that in affairs of importance, the Bishop could take no step without the participation of the people. This is still to be proved; for the Bishops demonstrate on the other side, that in all the treaties of the Bishops of Geneva,

* Spon. Book II.

with the Counts of Zeringuen, of Genevois, of Burgundy, and with the Dukes of Savoy, there is no mention made of the people.

* The republicans farther maintain, that the community and magistrates, contracted alliances and made treaties of peace, without the participation of the Bishop; as in the year one thousand two hundred and eighty-five, with Amedeus, Count of Savoy; in the year one thousand five hundred and fifteen, with the Canton of Fribourg; and in the year one thousand five hundred and twenty-six, with that of Berne. The Bishops reply that these treaties were made in times of trouble and without authority; and they prove their assertion from the subsequent adjustments, which took place. From those it appears, that the citizens of Geneva, disclaimed the alliances, which they had contracted with foreign powers; and there is not one settlement on record, in which this clause is not expressed.† It is besides asserted, that the revenues of the city were divided between the citizens and the Bishops, and that the magistrates shared a third part. But this division was never deemed a mark of independence; for, if that were true, how many cities

* Spon. *ibid.* , † Spon *ibid.*

would enjoy liberty, which are in a far different situation? Finally they add, that Geneva was a Roman colony; and that Charles V. writing to the city of Geneva, in the year one thousand five hundred and thirty, does not address his letter to the Bishop, but to the magistrates, to the council and community of Geneva, and treats the place as an imperial city. As to the first part of this assertion, Geneva in this respect has nothing, which is not common to most of the cities of Dauphiné, of Provence, and of Languedoc; none of whom, however, has yet claimed Sovereign authority, under the title of a Roman colony. As to the letter of Charles V. it is so true, that no consequence favourable to the claims of the republic can be drawn from it, that many of the imperial cities were never free. Such are briefly the proofs, which the Bishops, the city of Geneva and the Dukes of Savoy, furnish of their claims to Sovereign power over the city.

It is easy to conclude from this statement, that a surrender of the right of the Bishops, made to a Prince so powerful, and so well able to enforce the claims as the King of France, would not be agreeable to the politics of Savoy. Political sagacity is ever mingled with distrust; affairs of much inferior consequence are capable of exciting alarm.

Francis of Sales was far from treating concerning his right over Geneva; Charles Emmanuel, was however, full of apprehension on the subject; and this induced him to refuse the requested permission to proceed to Dijon. The holy prelate, who always considered the will of God, as the leading spring of human events, and who, as he himself informs us, had always made it a law, to desire nothing and to fear nothing, received the refusal of the Duke, with the same spirit, with which he would have received the permission he solicited; he wrote to this effect to the mayor and magistrates of Dijon, and continued his functions with his usual tranquillity.

* He received at the same time a decree of the parliament of Burgundy, on the authority of which the bailiwick of Gex depends, which he had been soliciting from the period of his return from the court of France. It had been issued, agreeably to the letters patent of His Most Christian Majesty, which he had obtained for the re-establishment of the Catholic religion in the bailiwick. The decree expressly ordained, that the Ecclesiastical property, usurped by the Calvinists, should be restored. This article could not be carried

* Aug. of Sales. Book V. .

into execution without extreme difficulty; and Francis judged that his authority, which was but little respected by the Calvinists, would not enable him to accomplish the task. He was an intimate friend of the Duke of Bellegarde, the governor of the country of Gex, and of the Baron of Luz; he accordingly entreated them both to repair to Gex, to assist him in the execution of the intentions of His Majesty. The Duke and the Baron proceeded thither; and Francis accompanied by many zealous and able Ecclesiastics, arrived there at the same time. The business was at first conducted with great tranquillity; the orders of the King were absolute; and no opposition could safely be raised in the presence of a governor, who was on the spot to execute the given orders. But the most perfect calm usually precedes the most violent tempest; as long as preaching and instruction were the sole objects of attention, no opposition was raised; but no sooner was the design of recovering the usurped benefices made known, than a general contest appeared likely to succeed. The presence and the authority of the Duke and of the Baron, and particularly the precautions, which they had taken to carry into effect the intentions of the King, restrained the ardour of the most violent; but these checks were not sufficient to prevent their resentment

from falling upon the holy prelate. They were apprised, that he had obtained the letters of the King, and the decree of the parliament; and his zeal was too well known to leave a doubt, that he would promote the execution of the plan to its whole extent. His death alone could interrupt the course of the proceeding; that therefore was determined, and means were discovered to administer poison. A violent fever immediately succeeded; but as a general suspicion on the subject prevailed in a country where he was known to have enemies, the physicians conjectured the cause of the complaint, and administered counter-poisons in such quantities, that at length the fever subsided, and he recovered his health. The strength of his constitution was however considerably impaired; and this accident was apparently one of the causes, which contributed to shorten his days.

Amidst the greatest violence of his disorder, his leading concern was to pray for his enemies, and to prevent the infliction of any punishment in consequence of the attempt on his life. So singular a degree of virtue made a great impression on two gentlemen in the retinue of the Duke of Bellegarde, zealous Calvinists, and men of talents; they had been moved by his sermons; his example

completed their conversion; they could not believe, that so correct an imitator of the patience of our Redeemer, could either misconceive or adulterate his doctrine; and contrasting the purity of his manners with the conduct of their ministers, they became fully convinced, that true faith must exist, where they observed such a brilliant assemblage of virtues. Their conversion was followed by a great number of others; but this success contributed only to inflame the hatred of the Calvinists. Francis abated nothing of his zeal; he took not even any additional precautions of security; and he did not leave the country, till he had gained a considerable number of souls to God, established churches and pastors, and adopted every measure, calculated to introduce the splendor of the Catholic religion. From Gex, he returned to Annecy; but he soon left it again, and performed on foot a journey of twelve long leagues, to visit our Lady's of Thonon, in order to return thanks to God for the benefit of health, which he had recovered, and for the re-establishment of the Catholic religion in the bailiwick of Gex.

As this city and Chablais, of which it is the capital, were indebted to him for their return to the Catholic Church, and as he had obtained for

them many favours from the Duke of Savoy, he was there received with the greatest demonstrations of joy. He had not been in that city since his elevation to the episcopacy; a circumstance, which induced the magistrates to propose a public entry; but Francis, whose humility rendered him averse to worldly honours, and who knew how to support his dignity by other means, declined the intended favour; he entered on foot followed by one servant, thus exhibiting more lustre by his distinguished virtue, than he could have derived from the most pompous equipage. A general concourse from the whole province proceeded to meet him; and the city of Thonon much altered from what it had been before, shewed him as great honour, as it had formerly testified hatred and contempt. He succeeded in strengthening in the faith, those who were yet weak; he completely softened the bitterness which had been lurking in the hearts of some, who conceived the city to have been ill used; he made himself all to all, to gain all to Christ.

* As he was on the eve of his departure to return to Annecy, two canons regular from the Abbey of Six, came to pay him a visit. This

* Aug. of Sales. Book V. Anon. Book II.

Abbey is situated in a low part of the Barony of Fossigny, between rugged mountains, of a considerable height; which are always covered with ice of such thickness, as never yields to the rays of the sun. Sometimes indeed in the greatest heats of summer, it is known to melt, and to fall with so tremendous a noise, that the whole country appears threatened with destruction. An eternal winter reigns in those desolate spots, and renders them inaccessible during the greatest part of the year. This frightful situation had been chosen, many centuries ago, by Ponce, of the illustrious house of the Barons of Fossigny, but more distinguished by his piety, in order to live in perfect seclusion; he had built the Abbey of Six, and had endowed it with considerable revenues; he afterwards died in the reputation of sanctity. Piety had long reigned in that holy place. But there is nothing, with which human weakness is sooner disgusted, than with strict regularity. In the process of time, the canons regular of this Abbey, degenerated from the virtue of their fathers. The institute was now on the decline, when James of Mouxy, succeeding to the regular superiors, was first appointed commendatary Abbot of the monastery. He claimed regular jurisdiction; the chapter opposed the claim, and appealed from his attempts to the Senate of

Chamberry. All regular jurisdiction was denied him; and the canons, without a superior, abandoned themselves to every species of disorder.

• It was to address complaints to the holy prelate, and to entreat him to apply a remedy, that the two canons, who have been mentioned, came to pay him a visit. After a long detail of the irregularities of their brethren, they represented, that, as there was no regular abbot, he had a right to visit the Abbey, and to make what regulations he should judge necessary for the re-establishment of order, and for the purpose of banishing scandals from the house of God; that he alone could apply a remedy to evils of such a magnitude; that they laid it upon his conscience; and that as to themselves, they had discharged their duty, by the information which they had given.

The holy prelate was affected with their remonstrances, and instantly departed to visit the Abbey of Six; he found affairs, in the deplorable situation, which had been represented. But as his prudence corresponded with his zeal, he thought that by doing too much he should accomplish nothing; that it was the same with respect to the disorders of the heart and of the mind, that it ever became necessary to proportion the remedies

to the strength of the patient; and that if he should lay on these canons too heavy a load, they would not fail to shake it off on the first occasion. On the other side, the chapter, taken unawares and without counsel, even softened by the amiable mildness and politeness of the prelate, received his visit and subjected themselves to the regulations, which he thought proper to make. Thus in a few days, order was re-established in this house.

* In the mean time, the report of the arrival of Francis at the Abbey of Six had been spread in Fossigny, and persons came from every quarter to pay their respects. Among others he received the deputies of the inhabitants of a valley, situated about three leagues from the monastery; they acquainted him with a most distressful accident, which had lately taken place. As the province is full of mountains of a very considerable height, the summits of two of these mountains had given way, and crushed in their fall several villages, many of the inhabitants, and a great number of flocks, which constituted the riches of the country. They added, that being reduced by this accident to extreme poverty, and unable to

* 1605. Aug. of Sales. Book V. Anon. Book II.

pay their taxes, they had applied to the treasury of the Duke of Savoy to obtain a release; that their application had been fruitless; that so far from gaining redress, they were summoned to remit what they were absolutely unable to pay; that they had reason to think, either that the evil was not believed to be so severe as it proved, or that their state of poverty and wretchedness was deemed a misrepresentation. They therefore entreated him to send persons on the spot, to verify the facts, that agreeably to the report he might receive, he might be enabled to write to the Duke in their favour.

Francis who had a most feeling heart for the miseries of his neighbour, was sensibly affected with this tale of disaster, and offered instantly to go to afford consolation, and administer all the relief in his power. These poor sufferers opposed his design, by representing the country to be so rugged and impassable, that a horse could never travel over it. The holy prelate asked them, if they were not come from the place; they replied, that they were poor people, accustomed to such fatigue. "And as to me," answered Francis, "my children, I am your father, obliged to provide for your consolation and your wants." He accordingly, in spite of every remonstrance which

could be made, departed with them on foot. Any person but himself would have repented of the undertaking; a whole day was necessary to go the three leagues from the Abbey of Six to the valley. The disaster was even greater than it had been represented. The inhabitants reduced to extreme poverty, retained scarcely the appearance of human beings; they were in a general want of clothes, houses, and subsistence. Francis mingled his tears with those of the sufferers; he consoled them, he gave them all the money, which he had brought with him, and promised to write to the Duke in their favour. He performed his promise, and succeeded to the full extent of his request.

But if Francis was affected with the misfortunes of these poor sufferers, they were no less struck at his ardent charity; they had never seen any of their Bishops, and perhaps not one of his predecessors had visited that inhospitable land. They were charmed with the mildness, which was painted on his countenance, and appeared in his conversation and in all his actions; and they could not sufficiently admire the patience and the joy, with which he endured their coarse and disgusting food, and their half-ruined cottages, which they themselves with difficulty inhabited. The holy prelate had the satisfaction of observing,

that the Catholic religion had been maintained among them, with the exception of some superstitions, which he was careful to remove. On his return to Thonon, he passed again by the Abbey of Six, where he made some additional regulations, which he judged necessary to support the good order, that he had established in that place.

The canons submitted to them with apparent obsequiousness; but as nothing is more difficult than completely to renounce libertinism, particularly when such a course has been followed by the violation of the duties of a holy state, they were no sooner apprised of the return of Francis to Annecy, than they appealed to the Senate of Chambery against all the regulations, which he had introduced. Notwithstanding his aversion to legal proceedings, he prosecuted this affair, and finally obtained a decree, which confirmed his regulations, and gave him the power of reforming the Abbey. Francis, who was possessed of firmness, when lenient measures were found ineffectual, now resumed his plan of reformation. He experienced some resistance; but he at length succeeded in his purpose, by distributing those who were the most hostile to his measures, among other houses of the order; and

by substituting in their place persons of exemplary conduct, whose lives afterwards afforded great edification.

* Francis had scarcely adjusted this affair, when he received letters from Dijon. The mayor and the magistrates were not disheartened with the refusal of the Duke of Savoy; they applied to the parliament to support their request, and wrote at the same time very urgent letters to his Highness, in order to obtain his consent, that the Bishop of Geneva should preach the ensuing lent in their city. The Duke could no longer persist in his refusal. He yielded to their entreaties; and the mayor and magistrates apprised the holy prelate of the result, by the letters to which we have alluded. Francis in answer informed them, that as the only obstacle, which prevented his compliance with their wishes, was now removed, he would not fail to repair to Dijon for the beginning of lent.

As his time of preparation for this great work was short, he was obliged to leave Annecy, where he was perpetually immersed in business; he retired to the Castle of Sales, to enjoy more

* Anon. Book II.

leisure for study and prayer. These two objects he never separated; and, though he never neglected prayer, he studied, but more at the feet of his crucifix, than in books. It was thence he derived that zeal, and that pathetic eloquence, which gained the heart, while it subdued the understanding. He had formed a holy habit of recollection and of the most sublime contemplation; and he had so far made himself master of his imagination and his senses, that they raised no obstacle to the impressions, which God designed to make on his mind and on his heart. His fidelity in corresponding with the motions of grace always attracted new blessings; and the purity of his heart enabled him to hold with God those intimate communications, once so frequent, but now so rare in the Christian world. Indeed those who observe in the scriptures, those apparitions, those visions, that knowledge of future and distant things, granted to so many Saints of the Old and New Testament, finally those ordinary communications between God and man, cannot but wonder, and with reason, that they have ceased, or at least, that they are by no means so common. A species of incredulity has even arisen on this subject; and those who pretend to have had revelations, are without ceremony treated as persons of visionary minds, and the historians,

who record them, are considered as writers of a bad taste.

It is true that credit is not to be given to all kinds of Spirits; that much light and discernment are necessary on so nice a subject; that too much credulity in concerns of this nature would be dangerous, and would immediately lead to fanaticism; but it would be an opposite extreme, to deny all communication of this nature between God and his Saints, those chosen souls, those pure hearts, which He has Himself formed, and with so much complacency filled with His own heart and His love.* We shall therefore make no difficulty in recording what all the historians of St. Francis of Sales relate to have happened in his retirement at the Castle. It is a vision, with which it pleased God to favour him, respecting the order of the Visitation, of which he was one day to be the founder. They affirm, that, as he was once engaged in profound meditation, and was praying with his usual fervour, that he might become useful in promoting the glory of God and the salvation of souls, whom He had been pleased to redeem with His blood, God made known to him, that he should one day establish a new order

* Aug. of Sales. Book V. Anon. Book II.

of Nuns, who should edify the Church by the splendor of their virtues, and perpetuate to the latest posterity his spirit, his sentiments and his maxims. These writers add, that God made known to him the principal persons, who were to second him in his design ; and that this impression was so clear in his mind, that he afterwards recognised the Baroness de Chantal, as the person whom God had destined to be the first Nun of the new order. She was at that time at Dijon, to which place she had been attracted by the reputation of the holy prelate, who was to preach the lent ; and in that city was formed that holy connection, of which the circumstances will be related in the seventh book of this history.

In the mean time, as lent approached, Francis, having adjusted the affairs of his diocess, departed for Dijon. He was there received with extraordinary honours by the city and the parliament ; and preached with a degree of applause, which attracted thither the nobility and the people from the neighbourhood. The largest churches were scarcely sufficient to contain the people who crowded to his sermons ; and, what was extremely observable, the Calvinists, who were numerous at Dijon, came in great crowds as well as the Catholics. This engaged him to discuss several

points of controversy; an exercise, in which he excelled; and he acquitted himself with so much energy and eloquence, that considerable numbers were converted, and returned to the Catholic Church.

The ministers of the reformed religion beheld this success with considerable uneasiness; but there was no method of stopping its progress, but by agreeing to a public conference, to which Francis had so often invited them to resort. Many were tempted to try the experiment; but reflecting that they would have to deal with the Apostle of Chablais, with a man so celebrated by the great number of conversions, which he had made, they thought it a more secure method to declaim against him in their sermons. Affairs would have remained in this situation, if one of them more presumptuous than the rest, had not offered to commence a discussion. Francis accepted the challenge; and the conference was postponed till after Easter, as the occupations of the holy prelate did not permit him to attend at an earlier period. The members of the consistory were extremely mortified, that the minister should engage in such a concern without their participation. He was given to understand, that if any one were selected to defend the common cause, he

would not be the person; and a prohibition was given to him, to keep the engagement which he had made. When the time agreed upon was come, the minister made not his appearance; and Francis desired the Baron of Luz and many other persons of distinction, who had witnessed the challenge of the minister, to keep that circumstance in their minds.

Whatever fatigue the holy prelate experienced in preaching daily, and in giving answers to such as came to consult him, his zeal was not satisfied; he spent his afternoons in visiting the hospitals of the city, and of the suburbs, to console and instruct the sick; he often heard their confessions, and administered the sacraments. No distress, no want escaped his attention; and it was deemed incomprehensible, how a single man could be equal to such multiplied occupations.

When the holidays of Easter were passed, and Francis was on the eve of his departure for Annecy, the city came in a body to thank him, and made an offer of a service of plate, which had been procured, for the purpose of testifying their acknowledgments. Francis looked at it, and applauded the workmanship; but in spite of every solicitation, that could be made, he could

not be persuaded to accept the present. He observed to them, in his own excuse, that God had ordered him to give gratuitously, what he had received from His infinite mercy, without any cost ; that he had never taken any thing for his sermons, and that he would not now begin, by availing himself of the kindness of his friends, to derive any temporal advantage from his ministry ; that however if they absolutely insisted, that he should receive any recompence for his labour, he asked a favour, which was infinitely more valuable to him than all the money they could offer ; that it consisted in their kind remembrance of him in their prayers, and in preserving for him those sentiments of friendship, with which he had been so greatly honoured. The mayor unable to overcome his resolution, desired him to say, how he would wish the present to be disposed of. Francis replied, that the act of disposing of it, would amount to an acceptance ; that he left it to their charity to employ it in the manner, they should judge most expedient. This was nothing more than to express, in concealed terms, that it should be devoted to the purposes of charity. His intention was followed, and the value of the plate was distributed among the poor. The contempt of riches has always been deemed the mark of a great soul ; but it is unquestionably true, that it

is likewise the most unequivocal proof of the purest virtue. As wealth infallibly procures every other temporal blessing, it cannot become an object of contempt without rising above every thing, that can flatter the senses. Thus the refusal of the holy prelate to accept the intended present of the city of Dijon, was considered with peculiar esteem, as those, who witnessed it, felt themselves incapable of imitating such conduct.

On his return to Annecy, he gave a still more striking proof of the contempt, with which he was impressed for riches, and for dignities, which might raise him in the estimation of mankind. The reputation, which he had acquired at Dijon, had reached the court of France, and had awakened in the heart of Henry IV. the esteem and friendship, which he had formerly felt for this great man. He spoke on the subject to Deshayes, the intimate friend of Francis, who has been mentioned; and he gave it to him in charge to write to the holy prelate in his name, that if he would come to Paris, he would prove to him, that he had not forgotten him, and that he intended to bestow on him a considerable Abbey, not doubting that he would make a better use of his revenues, than any other person, on whom it might be conferred. Deshayes acquitted him-

self of the commission ~~with~~ joy; but Francis replied, that he wished him to make to his majesty, acknowledgments proportioned to the kindness with which he graciously designed to honour him; that he feared riches as much as others could desire them; that the less he should possess, for the less he should have to answer; that the slender revenue which he had was sufficient, and that more would only serve to create embarrassment.

This refusal did not abate the ardour of this great King, in discovering some means of serving the holy prelate; and he ordered Deshayes, to tell him again by letter, that if he declined the Abbey, he would not certainly refuse a Cardinal's hat, which it was his intention to solicit for him. But this dignity, the highest object of ambition to the most aspiring clergymen, was not sufficient to tempt him; he said to Deshayes in answer, that his majesty was willing to do him an honour, of which he was unworthy; that he had been raised against his will to the episcopacy; that God was his witness with respect to the violence, which had been offered him; that a greater dignity would overpower him; that he knew his proportion of strength, and his deficiency in virtue; that self-love and vanity, from which no breast is free,

needed not to be flattered ; that they were already but too strong, and that it was not his purpose, to raise fresh obstacles to his salvation. He added with that freedom, which he always shewed to his friends, that he would willingly wear a red robe, if the cloth could be dyed with his own blood, shed for the Faith and for the salvation of his neighbour ; that as to the Cardinal's hat, if it were but three steps from him, he would not go so far to take it ; that he did not despise the dignity, which was offered, but that greatness did not suit him ; that every one ought to know himself ; and that he was convinced, that God had not made him for the enjoyment of honours.

* When the answer of Francis was reported to Henry the Great, he admired it, and could not help observing, that hitherto he had believed himself superior to all those whom he was enabled to oblige ; but that the Bishop of Geneva, by that happy independence, in which his virtue placed him, was raised as much above him, as he was elevated by his situation above the rest of mankind.

* Anon. Book II.

Francis the year following preached the lent at La Roche, a small town of his diocess. This great man, who had been admired at the Court of France, at Paris and at Dijon, was delighted with preaching to simple but docile souls; and on that subject he said, when he observed his audience consist of peasants, of mechanics and of the inhabitants of villages, that they were of the description of persons, to whom Christ himself had preached; that He scarcely had been observed to deliver His divine word to the great; that He had appeared at court but once, and that then He had been treated with contempt; that after that event, he could not sufficiently express his astonishment, that preachers should court splendid audiences; and that after all that could be said, the soul of a peasant, had cost our Redeemer, as much as that of a prince. Though the fatigue of preaching every day must have been considerable, in the time of a fast, which he observed with rigour, and to which he added many other austerities, his zeal was not satisfied.* Instead of enjoying a reasonable share of repose, after the labour of preaching, he assembled the Curates and Ecclesiastics of the neighbourhood; he held

* Aug. of Sales. Book V.

conferences with them on cases of conscience, and instructed them in the ceremonies of the Church. This labour was followed by another; he terminated their suits, composed their differences, visited the poor and the sick. If to this be added the time he allotted to prayer, a duty which he never omitted, and that portion, which he devoted to study, it will be easy to judge that he had but little left for repose.

During his stay at La Roche, he gave an example of charity, which will not perhaps appear remarkable to many, but which was certainly meritorious in the sight of God. Among the poor, who came daily to receive charity at his door, there was a person, who had been deaf and dumb from his nativity; he was a man, who led an innocent life, and not being destitute of understanding, was sometimes employed in performing menial services. As it was known that the holy prelate was fond of the poor, this man was sometimes introduced at his repast, to give him the pleasure of seeing him express his meaning by signs, and comprehend those, that were made by others. Francis, affected at his wretched condition, ordered that he should be taken into his household, and attended to with great care. It was observed to him, that he needed not such a

burden, and that the poor object would be perfectly useless: "useless," replied the prelate, "is the practice of charity to be accounted nothing? The more God has afflicted him, the more he should excite our pity; if we were in his situation, should we wish others to observe such rigid economy under similar circumstances?" He was accordingly admitted into the number of the domestics of the holy prelate, who kept him till his death. But his care for him extended farther; he undertook himself to instruct him by signs, in the mysteries of faith; he succeeded in that business after incredible toil. He taught him to make his confession by signs, and would himself be his confessor: he afterwards admitted him to communion, to which he never approached but with such respect and devotion as gave general edification. He survived the holy prelate but a short time, and died of grief for the loss of so good a master.

After the conclusion of lent, Francis returned to Annecy, for the Synod, which he regularly held every year. As it was not his opinion, that many regulations should be made, but that it was more useful to enforce the observance of those, which had been framed either by his predecessors or himself, we do not find in this Synod, any

statute worthy of observation: It may be briefly recorded, that he was extremely exact in observing himself, what he prescribed to others. Thus having ordained, in the preceding Synod, that the incumbents should be careful to furnish their churches with chalices and ciboriums of silver, with books and all ornaments necessary for the decent performance of the divine service, and having learnt that there was a deficiency in this respect in certain churches, which he was obliged to support, he gave orders that provision should be instantaneously made for that purpose, in preference to any other expenditure.

He received at the same time letters from Rome, which conveyed intelligence of the death of Pope Clement VIII. of the election of the Cardinal of Medici, who had taken the name of Leo XI. and of the determination of this Pope to make him Cardinal on the first promotion. His affliction at the last part of the intelligence was proportioned to his extreme aversion to dignities and honours; he begged of God to prevent this circumstance, and not to permit an elevation, which perhaps would render him less humble and less agreeable in His sight. His prayer was heard, but in a manner very different from his desires. Leo XI. was the same Cardinal of Medici, who

after having concluded the treaty of Vervins, had passed by Thonon, when Francis was engaged in the celebrated mission, which has been recorded; the Cardinal afterwards saw him at Rome, and became better acquainted than he had been at Thonon, with the whole extent of his merit and virtue. This Cardinal was himself one of the most distinguished characters of the sacred College, by his birth, his great talents, and his very sincere piety. His virtues had raised him to the Holy See; and the expectations raised by his elevation were such, as a Pontiff of the most eminent sanctity naturally excited; his intentions were extremely pure; they were directed to the general good of Christendom, and to the reformation of abuses. In order to carry them into effect, he had formed a plan of calling to his assistance, all those whom he knew to be distinguished by sanctity and learning. As Francis was of this number, he had intended to make him Cardinal, in hopes that this dignity would enable the prelate to be constantly about him without scruple, and to aid him with his lights and his advice.

But God, whose judgments are inscrutable, who often grants long life to the impious, while he permits good people to be carried off by a premature death, God, whose judgments, though

little conformable to our weak notions, are always adorable, did not permit that this great Pontiff should execute his good purposes; he died twenty-seven days after his election, and made place for Cardinal Borghese, who took the name of Paul V. He was one of the friends of Francis; he knew his merit and his virtue; but he had different views from his predecessor; he always honoured the holy prelate with his esteem and his protection; but he did no more. By the death of Leo XI. Francis was delivered from the fear of being made Cardinal. This manner of speaking will appear singular to ambitious minds, to those votaries of the world, who know no other goods beyond the present life, or who know them only to neglect them, and to give a decided preference to terrestrial objects. The just man, who lives by faith, has far different sentiments; he fears what the world desires, he avoids what it covets; and wholly engrossed with the greatness and eternity of God, as the holy prelate frequently expressed himself, he cannot comprehend, how such attachment can be shewn to the vain and perishable enjoyments of the world. These dispositions of Francis were so well known, that the Duke of Savoy having heard that he had declined the dignity of Cardinal, could not help saying, that the Bishop of Geneva had entirely forgotten the

world, and that he remembered the court of his Sovereign, only when he said mass, and begged of God to sanctify it.

He received about this time letters from the senate of Chamberry, by which he was requested to do for his country, what he had done for France, and to honour their city with his preaching, during the ensuing lent, agreeably to what he had performed so lately for the city of Dijon. Francis answered this demand with his usual politeness, by complying with the request. But while he was making preparations for this new labour, Vespasian Ajazza, Abbot of Abondance, came to pay him a visit. He was a man of exemplary piety, and of consummate prudence and mildness of character; he had been long the intimate friend of the holy prelate, and undertook nothing of moment without his advice. He beheld with uneasiness for several years, the want of regularity in his religious. They were not addicted to great disorders; but they led a life, very remote from the sanctity of the rule of St. Augustine, which they professed. However, as they were all very old, he had not judged it expedient to oblige them to observances, that had not yet been practised; this condescension, which arose from no other motive than his aversion to give pain to his

religious, was to him a subject of great disquietude; and he came to consult the holy prelate on the plan, which should be adopted to re-establish order in his Abbey.* Francis, who was meekness itself, commended the moderation of the Abbot; and as it was his maxim, that if any deviation from the straight line of duty took place, it was better that it should arise from too much mildness, than from an excess of severity, he advised him not to molest his religious; he added however, that in his opinion, order should be re-established in the Abbey in future; that for such a purpose it became necessary to grant pensions to the religious, and oblige them to surrender the monastery to a reformed congregation, which might be introduced; that he knew of no persons better calculated to promote the object in view, than the Feuillans, though of a different order; that, if he approved of this plan, he himself would undertake to write to the Pope, to obtain the bulls necessary to carry it into effect. The Abbot gave his approbation to the expedient; Francis wrote to his Holiness; the bulls were sent; the Feuillans were established in the Abbey of Abondance, where they exist at the present day, giving great edification.

* Anon. Book II.

While these transactions were taking place, Francis was incessantly engaged in his design of performing the general visitation of his diocess. He knew that it formed one of the leading duties of Bishops; and he had perpetually before his eyes this advice of the Apostle: *Take heed to yourselves, and to the whole flock, wherein the Holy Ghost has placed you.** Having therefore collected the different statements, which he had ordered to be prepared, or which he had drawn up himself, he departed on the fifteenth of October, in the year one thousand six hundred and five, to begin this great work; for he had not any prospect of completing it till his return from Chamberry. The diocess of Geneva is of considerable extent, and very populous; abounding with a great number of cities, towns and villages; a part of it is covered with mountains of an immense height, and of difficult access. It is observable, that the temperature of the air is so different, that there are places covered with snow and ice, while others are scorched with the rays of the sun, and are remarkable for extreme heat. A part of this diocess extends to Switzerland, inhabited principally by Lutherans and Calvinists; another part reaches to Savoy, and a third beyond

* Acts 20. 28.

the Rhone to the dominions of His Christian Majesty.

* It was to this part that the holy prelate proceeded first; he allotted at least an entire day to the visit of each parish. He said mass, preached, gave confirmation, explained himself the catechism to the children, in order to teach the curates by his example the importance of this function, on which the greatest part of clergymen do not set that value which it merits; and he heard the confessions of all those who applied to him. Such a multiplicity of occupations did not prevent him from taking great care to obtain information, concerning the irregularities which prevailed in families. He laboured to re-establish peace between married people, a good understanding between parents and children, servants and masters, and to reconcile those, whose inveterate enmities gave public scandal. The extreme mildness of his character gained him access to all hearts. Nothing escaped his charitable vigilance; the poor, the sick, the imprisoned, felt its influence. He relieved some by his alms; he soothed others by his attentive care; he benefitted others by his credit. But his principal concern was

* Aug. of Sales. Book V.

employed in knowing thoroughly and regulating the conduct of the pastors of the different churches, which he visited; and this was the leading purpose of the notes and memorials, which he had prepared; and which he always consulted before he entered the places of his visit. He shewed the greatest honour, to those among the curates, who led an irreproachable life, and performed in a spirit of holiness the duties of their ministry. He encouraged the good, he strengthened the weak; and notwithstanding his extreme mildness, he threatened with rigorous punishment, those who gave scandal, or against whom just complaints had been made. He afterwards prepared new memorials from his own observations, and occasionally consulted them, to prevent any misconception.

He performed all his visits on foot, and never incumbered himself with baggage, or with any articles, which might supply the want of necessities, which he often experienced in poor places; the meanest cottage was that which he always chose for himself; and after such various fatigues, he was frequently reduced to the necessity of sleeping upon straw. These inconveniences never affected him, except as far as they were felt by his attendants; this was the only

source of his uneasiness; for as to himself, when any pity was expressed in consequence of the bad accommodations, which he often found, or of the inconveniences which he was obliged to suffer, he answered with a holy joy, that he had never yet met with a lodging as incommodious as the stable of Bethlehem, nor with a bed as rough, as that of the cross; that however, our Redeemer had been pleased to be born in one, and to die on the other. He added, that these poor people, who furnished him with accommodations, were neither lodged, nor did they rest more commodiously than himself; that the best method of inducing them to support their poverty with patience, was to partake of it with them; and to teach them by example, which is always more powerful than words, that their state did not present those terrors, which imagination might picture. It is thus, that the holy prelate, excited himself to suffer the inconveniences of life, by the example of our Redeemer, and that of a great portion of mankind, whom Providence has destined to lead a poor and laborious life. "They are men like ourselves," added he, "they are Christians, called to grace and to glory; they are enabled like us to call God their father; finally they are our brethren, and perhaps better and more holy than ourselves, more agreeable to God, and destined to a greater share

of glory. Why therefore should we make such a difference between them and ourselves? Why should we think ourselves degraded, and objects of compassion, because for the space of some days, we experience those hardships, which they are doomed to endure during their whole lives."

The love of the poor was on all occasions, one of the most favourite virtues of the holy prelate; but he made this love consist, not only in relieving them, but in visiting them, and in conforming his manner of living to their situation. The faith with which he was animated, made him see Jesus Christ concealed under the persons of the poor; and he often observed, that of them had it been said: *What you have done for them, you have done for me.*

As the lent approached, he was obliged to interrupt his visitation, to repair to Chamberry. He began by there making a retreat at the house of the Jesuits, who enjoyed at once, his esteem and his confidence. He usually said on that subject, that to preach with effect, it was necessary, after the example of St. John and of Christ himself, to retire to solitude, and as it were, to the desert, before the duty of ascending the pulpit could be performed. It was from this source,

that he derived that fire, those lights, which excited faith in the hearts of heretics, and hatred of sin in the breasts of sinners. He said nothing of which he was not fully convinced, and which he did not sanction by his practice. "Mankind," would he exclaim, "look at us at the time, that they listen; we have to preach to their eyes as well as to their ears; one of these objects is accomplished by the word; the other by example, which produces a more powerful effect." "Who will believe me," would he add, "if I shall preach penance, unless I should exemplify it by my practice."* His behaviour at Chamberry was similar to his appearance at Dijon; the same success attended his sermons, the same zeal was displayed in his conduct. But the same polite attention was by no means shewn him, as he had experienced in France.

During the lent a criminal procedure was brought before the senate. The parties on both sides, were powerful; but the fact, which had taken place in the diocess of Geneva, did not appear sufficiently attested. On that ground, the senate ordered that an episcopal monitory should be published at Annecy. Francis having heard

* Aug. of Sales. Book V. Anon. Book II.

of the affair, obtained an account of the whole proceeding, and examined its merits with attention. The fact appeared to him sufficiently established ; he did not judge the affair of such importance, as to require, that the censures of the Church should be employed in its elucidation, though fresh information should even be wanted ; and he discovered much resentment on both sides. In general he disapproved the plan of employing the authority of the Church, in order to make such discoveries ; he wished not consciences to be disturbed for affairs unworthy of such an expedient ; and he thought the business under consideration to be of this description. On that account, he refused the requested monitory, and forbade the judge of his court to grant it. The senate was irritated at this refusal, and signified to him, that, if their wishes were not attended to, his temporalities should be seized. Francis, who possessed as much firmness as mildness of character, when his duty prompted him to act, replied, that to employ such a menace, indicated no acquaintance with his character ; that he should always shew great respect for the senate ; but that, though he were to lose his life, he would never act against his conscience. This answer gave considerable embarrassment to the senate, as the members of that body were per-

suaded, that the loss of property was not sufficient to affect a man so devoted to his duty; and they felt besides some sense of shame in thus treating so great a Bishop, who passed for a Saint, and who had repaired to Chamberry solely at their solicitation. He had many friends in that assembly, who were of opinion, that no farther proceedings should take place. The opposite party however gained the ascendancy. His temporal possessions were seized; a senator reported the proceeding to him, in terms so injurious, that he could not help saying, that disrespect had been shewn to his character. The predictions of the senate were verified by the event. Francis abated nothing of his firmness, and continued to refuse the publication of the monitory. It was believed, that he would make complaints to the Duke of Savoy in consequence of the unjust seizure; and it was not doubted, that this Prince would order an immediate restoration of the effects. But Francis answered, that he would not bring such a disgrace on the senate; that he had never yet made application to the Prince for his private concerns, and that he would not begin at so late a period.

In the mean time the injury done to the holy prelate, excited proportionably louder murmurs, as his moderation was more conspicuous. It was

declared in very distinct terms, that such conduct was a bad return for such eminent services ; that the senate owed him very extraordinary regard, as all the world knew, that their solicitations had drawn him to Chamberry ; that the Prince would assuredly disapprove the procedure against him ; and that a Bishop would be in a very lamentable situation indeed, if he were obliged to shew implicit and blind obedience to the orders of the senate, even against his own conscience. These complaints, which became every day louder, at length induced the senate, to send him a proposal, by which they agreed to restore his effects, if he would present a request for that purpose. But the holy prelate, who deemed it his duty on this occasion to support the honour of his character, replied, that the senate was too just, not to repair, without his interference, the wrong which they had done him without his participation. The senate was therefore reduced to the necessity of restoring the sequestered property without any petition.

Francis on this occasion gave a great example of virtue. He had been cruelly insulted by the senator, who brought him the intelligence of the seizure of his temporalities. A canonry in his Cathedral soon after became vacant ; he gave the

benefice to a nephew of this senator,* as he knew the young man to be possessed of piety and merit. This was the revenge to which he resorted in consequence of the indecent conduct of the magistrate, who could not afterwards sufficiently admire the eminent virtue of the holy prelate. Nothing wounds the feelings more acutely, than injuries inflicted by persons, on whom we have conferred any obligation; and if contempt be added to insult, the heart swells with indignation, and the offence is less easily pardoned. In these circumstances was the holy prelate at that time placed. It was entirely at the request of the senate, that he had proceeded to Chamberry to preach the lent; all the members of that body could not but feel the obligation. One of them however had addressed him in a strain so contemptuous, that, though the most humble and patient of men, he could not help speaking in a tone of complaint. However no sooner does an opportunity occur, than he revenges himself of this injury, by conferring a benefaction. There is doubtless something great in refraining from revenge; but to repay an enemy with kindness, is an effect of the most distinguished generosity.

* Maupas Life of St. Francis. Part II.

While the holy prelate was exhibiting such instances of the most eminent virtue, intelligence was received, that the Duke of Savoy and the Duke of Nemours, were engaged in a serious contest. The latter claimed the entire sovereignty of the county of Genevois; the Duke of Savoy on the other hand insisted, that it formed a part of his dominions. Every expedient was employed by each party, to terminate the business by accommodation, but without effect; nothing therefore remained but an appeal to the sword. The Duke of Nemours first took the field; the circumstance of time was extremely favourable to his views. The Duke of Savoy was engaged in another war, which was maintained against him in Piedmont; and it was not possible to detach any part of his troops, without weakening his army too much, and exposing his country to imminent danger of invasion. The Duke of Nemours availed himself of so favourable a conjuncture; he collected his forces with expedition, and appeared on the banks of the Rhone in a situation to avenge the injustice, which, in his estimation, had been committed against him by the Duke of Savoy. It was not doubted, that he would commence his operations by the siege of Annecy; where he had intended to establish his head quarters. This obliged Francis to depart immediately after Easter,

in order to console his people, who were extremely alarmed at the projects of the Duke of Nemours. His presence increased their consternation. As he was tenderly beloved, no one could endure, that he should be shut up in a town, which was about to sustain a siege; and which, as it was ill fortified, and had but a faint and distant prospect of succour, could not fail to be taken, and perhaps carried by assault.*

Representations were therefore made to him, that the troops of the Duke of Nemours, were composed principally of Calvinists; that he must be aware of the hatred, which they entertained for him; that if the city should be taken, and it was morally impossible that it could escape that danger, he would be the first victim, sacrificed to their fury and vengeance; that the Duke of Nemours, who knew his attachment and that of his family to the service of the Duke of Savoy, would perhaps rejoice at the fate of a prelate, whom he regarded as his enemy; that as long as he should remain among them, his presence would serve only to increase their fears and their alarms; that while the gates of the city remained open, they exhorted him to retire; that God was

* Aug. of Sales. Book V. Anon. Book II.

going to chastise them for the little advantage, which they had derived from his good example, and his pious instructions; that they alone were the culprits, and that it was not just, that an innocent man like himself, should be involved in the chastisement, which was about to be inflicted on their sins.

* Francis, after thanking them for this testimony of their affection, replied with a degree of firmness, which cannot be sufficiently admired, that the advice given bore a strong resemblance, to an exhortation which should be made to a shepherd, to seek security by flight on seeing the wolves ready to devour his flock; that he was well aware, that the troops of the Duke of Nemours consisted principally of Calvinists; that the inhabitants of Geneva, who were not friendly to him, formed a considerable part of the army; that even on this account, he was determined to encounter with his people all the hazards of war, in order to prevent, if the city should be taken, the seduction of his people, the profanation of holy things, and such other scenes of violence, as usually attend similar disasters; that he was sensible, to what length the rage of the Calvinists could be carried; but

* Anon, *ibid.*

that he had never wished for any thing with more ardour, than to shed his blood for the faith; that he still entertained hopes, that God would not permit such a series of misfortunes, if they returned to Him with their whole hearts; that he would remain purposely to urge them to that conduct; that independently of every other consideration, his life was not more precious, than the lives of so many good people, who were exposed to the same danger; and that if he were to lose it, he could not possibly die in a more glorious cause, than in serving those, whom God had entrusted to his care.

In the mean time, the Duke of Nemours, who had been stopped by the passage of the Rhone longer than was convenient for the success of his enterprise, arrived before Annecy. The city was invested the same day, and on the following morning the siege was opened in due form. At the same time a rumour was spread, that the Duke of Nemours, in order to attract greater crowds to his standard, was determined to grant liberty of conscience in the whole county of Genevois, of which Annecy is the capital, and in all the country, which he might take from the Duke of Savoy. On receiving this intelligence, the holy prelate could not restrain his tears; and after

having for a considerable time sighed before God, he appeared with a tranquil countenance, and addressing himself to those, who were present, he said: "since the Duke of Nemours abandons the cause of God, and sacrifices it to his ambition, God will abandon him in his turn, and he will not succeed in his designs." These words were considered as a prediction, that the city would not be taken. Accordingly it was soon known, that Victor Amedeus, the Prince of Piedmont, was advancing by rapid marches to the assistance of Annecy, with an army superior to that of the Duke of Nemours. The Duke thought it prudent not to await his arrival; he raised the siege, and some days after, the Prince of Piedmont entered Annecy. He took up his quarters with the holy Bishop, embraced him several times in public, and openly acknowledged his conviction, that his zeal and firmness had saved the city. Francis, whose attention was engrossed by the interests of heaven, availed himself of this opportunity to engage the Prince to restore peace to several of the monasteries in his diocese, where the religious could not agree with their Abbots concerning the division of Ecclesiastical property. He requested the support of his authority, in reforming some houses of Nuns, whose conduct was not so regular, as he could wish. The

Prince, who could refuse him nothing, complied with his entreaties, and supported with his authority and even with his presence, all his laudable designs.

In the mean time, the Duke of Nemours, after having been constrained to raise the siege of Annecy, fled before the troops of the Prince of Piedmont; all places, encouraged by this success, shut their gates at his approach; a spirit of desertion began to spread in his army; and the prediction of the holy prelate, that he would not succeed in his designs, was but too accurately verified. This reverse of fortune led him to propose an accommodation. On the other side, the affairs of Piedmont required the services of those troops, which the Prince had detached from that quarter. Thus as both those Princes were equally interested in the return of peace, it was soon concluded. The Prince of Piedmont repassed the Alps, and Francis was enabled to continue the visitation of his diocess.

He departed from Annecy the eighteenth day of July, in the year one thousand six hundred and six, without any greater retinue, than on the first occasion, though he had to visit the most unpleasant and the poorest parts of the diocess of Geneva.

It was not at that time from a spirit of mortification and modesty only, that he was obliged to travel on foot. The mountains, which he had to cross, were so steep, and the rocks so craggy, that it became impossible to proceed in any other manner; it was often necessary to employ the assistance both of the hands and feet; and after experiencing at the bottom of these mountains excessive heats, the travellers were exposed on the summits to such a cold air, as made an impression on the strongest constitution.* One day he had reached the top of one of these dreadful mountains, overwhelmed with fatigue and cold, his hands and feet completely benumbed, in order to visit a single parish in that dreary situation; while he was viewing with astonishment those immense flakes of ice of an uncommon thickness, the inhabitants, who had approached to meet him, related, that some days before, a shepherd running after a strayed cow, had fallen into one of these tremendous precipices. They added, that his fate would never have been known, if his companion, who was in search of him, had not discovered his hat on the edge of the precipice. The poor man therefore imagined, that the shepherd might be still relieved; or if he should have perished, that

* Aug. of Sales. Book V.

he might be honoured with a Christian burial. With this view, he descended by the means of ropes this icy precipice, whence he was drawn up, pierced through with cold, and holding in his arms his companion who was dead, and almost converted into a block of ice. Francis hearing this account, turned to his attendants who were disheartened with the extreme fatigues, which they had every day to encounter, and availing himself of this circumstance to encourage them, he said: "some persons imagine, that we do too much; and we certainly do far less than these poor people. You have heard, in what manner one has lost his life, in an attempt to find a strayed animal; and how another has exposed himself to the danger of perishing, in order to procure for his friend a burial, which under those circumstances might have been spared. These examples speak to us in forcible language; by this charity we are confounded, we who perform much less for the salvation of souls entrusted to our care, than these poor people do for the security of animals confided to their charge."

He returned from this laborious visit, so fatigued, with his hands, feet and legs so pierced with cold, that unable to sustain nature amidst such toils, he was obliged to indulge in repose.

He was at that time in the village of Amancy, where a female peasant of the name of Pernetta Boutey had lately died in the odour of sanctity. Her death, precious in the sight of God, and the example of virtue which she had given during life, formed at that time the general subject of conversation. Francis had never seen her; but she had often written to him, and he had frequently favoured her with answers; and he himself had informed Madam de Chantal, that this worthy person had honoured him with her friendship. Being then at leisure, he desired the Dean of La Roche, who had known her well, to give him the particulars of her life. He complied with the request of the holy prelate nearly in the following manner.

Illustrious descent, which is held in such high estimation among mankind, is nothing in the sight of God. It does not indeed exclude the grace of God; but it furnishes no reason for expecting that blessing. It appears on the contrary, that God delights in communicating his favours to those, who have no distinguishing advantages in the eyes of men. This will appear from the life of this holy woman, whom I have often admired, and whose virtues I should be happy to imitate. She was the daughter of two inhabitants of La Roche, who were poor but virtuous, and

who spared no pains to give her a holy education. She corresponded with their parental solicitude; and from her earliest youth she appeared to be impressed with a most tender piety. She was handsome; and persons were found but too anxious to make to her that observation. But having heard that beauty is by no means such a blessing as is generally imagined by the female sex; she adopted a resolution, in order to preserve her innocence, to embrace a religious state. Her parents, who were not anxious for her settlement, strenuously opposed her design. She believed, that as they held the place of God, it was her duty to obey their commands; she regarded their will as an indication of the will of heaven; and engaged in marriage, because she thought that such was the will of God. Her spouse was rich, but of a hasty and overbearing character. God, who intended to exercise her patience, permitted that he should be infected with jealousy; the beauty of his wife gave him continual alarm; and her extraordinary virtue, which he much admired, was not sufficient to remove his uneasiness. The pain which he gave her in the violence and fury of his passion, was such as to exceed belief. The severe treatment which he shewed her, was proportioned to the fondness of his love; and the most cruel of her enemies could never have an-

noyed her more, than he by whom she was adored. She then began to regret, that she had not embraced a religious life; incessantly did she reflect on the tranquillity, which is felt in that happy state. But as those thoughts were unavailing, she prayed to God to send her an illness, which might deprive her of her beauty so fatal to her peace. Her prayer was not heard; her fasts and mortifications seemed to increase the charms of her person; she received the persecution of her husband with extreme meekness, and invincible patience; she was never heard to utter a complaint; she was not satisfied in placing her conduct above reproach; she avoided even the smallest appearances, which might create the least suspicion of guilt; she never walked abroad without a companion, and then only to repair to the church to perform her devotions. On all other occasions, she was observed to be engaged in her domestic concerns, in reading, in prayer and in labour, without any other will, than that of her husband, and incessantly studious to take such precautions, as had a tendency to remove his suspicions. But what was a perpetual subject of admiration, her love for her husband was never abated; she viewed his conduct with compassion; and she was afterwards heard to say, that she felt more acutely the pain, which arose in his breast

from his jealousy, than the sufferings which she herself underwent.

Such a series of virtue at length made an impression on the heart of this unhappy man; he condemned himself for his past suspicious conduct, and from that period, they lived together in the greatest tranquillity. This holy woman no longer infested with the fear of exciting the suspicion of her husband, devoted her whole attention to the practice of good works; she assiduously frequented the church, visited the sick, took care of the poor, on whom, as she was in very easy circumstances, she bestowed great charities, but always with the consent of her husband. Her first concern was to educate her children with care, and to inspect the conduct of her domestics; she said prayers with them, explained to them the catechism, or read to them some good book; but above all, she laboured incessantly to edify them by her example. She fasted on all Fridays. On vigils, on the ember days, and during lent she lived on bread, a small quantity of ill-seasoned vegetables, and drank only water. She rose always in the night, and remained an hour in prayer, during the most excessive colds, as well as in the mildest seasons. She always discovered an air of contentment, spoke little, always on edifying

subjects and with great mildness, and never of the favours, which she received from God, though they were of the most distinguished kind; this accounts for the little knowledge which is preserved of the blessings of this nature. She was never heard to detract her neighbour. Always patient, always humble, she concealed the defects of her neighbour, and particularly those of her husband, which certainly were not small, with more care than her own. As to decency and reserve, no person was ever more careful on that article; she even observed in this particular a scrupulous attention; and no better proof can be given, that jealousy is the most dreadful and irrational of all passions, than by observing that her husband was blind enough to entertain suspicions concerning her for a considerable period.

After having lived in this manner for forty-eight years, the time came, when God designed to recompense such distinguished virtue. She was observed to be more assiduous in prayer and the practice of good works; it was remarked, that she ordered fourteen loads of corn to be ground, which she put apart, with an abundance of vegetables, and that she was collecting all the money which she possessed. Her husband asked her, what she meant to do with her treasures? She re-

plied, that while time was allowed, it became necessary to multiply good works; that her death was approaching, and that she was hastening to make a provision for eternity. She desired afterwards to go to the church to receive the communion and the extreme-unction, saying, like the Centurion in the gospel, that she did not deserve, that her Saviour should come and visit her in her house. Her husband, who did not think her illness to be of so serious a nature, forbade her to execute that intention; she obeyed him, but desired her bier to be prepared, and put apart herself the cloth in which she wished to be buried. She was afterwards put to bed; she spoke no more but on the contempt of earthly things, on the love and fear of God, and on the desire which she entertained to be united to Him for ever. Some time after, she sent for her children, held to them the same language, exhorted them to love one another, and to pay to their father all the honour which they had hitherto divided between them both, and gave them her blessing. She was visited at this time by a devout young lady, one of her chosen friends, that came to offer her services; but she told her to go and prepare for death, and that they would soon see each other again in heaven. Soon after she became speechless; the extreme-unction was administered; after

receiving it, she exhibited no other sign of life, but an abundance of tears, which she shed in embracing the crucifix; she died on the day and at the hour, which she had mentioned. The devout young lady whose death she had foretold, followed her shortly after. To this day, the holy life, and the death, precious in the sight of God of this devout woman, form a subject of general conversation; the poor, to whom she was a mother, long deplored her death; and her family indulged in a degree of affliction, which is not abated.

The holy prelate appeared much affected at this account; and after the Dean had finished the narrative, the Bishop lifted up to heaven his eyes bathed in tears, and uttered those words of our Saviour: *I give thanks, unto thee O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and the prudent, and hast revealed them to little ones. Yea, Father: for so it hath seemed good in thy sight.**

As he availed himself of every circumstance with a view to eternity, this practice tended to rekindle his zeal; he could not wait for the com-

* Luke 10. 21.

plete restoration of his vigour; and after taking some time for repose, he continued his visitation. The situation of the places, the impassable nature of the roads, the desolation which war and heresy had every where occasioned, the multiplicity of affairs, and the extraordinary labour which he undertook, performing almost every thing himself, gave him incredible trouble. He tells us himself,* that the difficulties, which he had experienced in his visit, were not rivulets, that might easily be passed, but torrents violent enough to bear away the strongest men in their course; that he found crosses at every step, and that he had to toil without measure. He felt on this occasion a practical conviction, that God never abandons those who trust in him, and who labour for his glory. For he adds,† that God was so good to him, that He daily performed a species of miracle in his favour; that when he retired to rest at night, he was so overpowered, that he felt his body and mind an entire burden; that however he rose every morning with fresh vigour, and capable of continuing his labours, as if he had but just entered on his career. He acknowledges, that he found the best people in the world on those frightful mountains; and that with the exception

* Anon. Book II. † Ibid.

of some superstitions which he removed, nothing could exceed their zeal for the Catholic religion. * "What a reception!" says he, "what a veneration for their Bishop! The day before yesterday I arrived at a small town in the night; but the inhabitants had lighted such a number of fires, as exhibited an appearance of open day. O how deserving are they of a better Bishop than myself." It was neither a splendid equipage, affected pomp, or studied grandeur, that attracted this veneration; his virtue alone supported his dignity. It is a singular illusion to imagine, that a religion founded on benevolence, can be supported only by the splendor of worldly greatness.

† He at length completed this laborious visit; and on his return to Annecy, he dispatched to Rome his brother John Francis of Sales, a canon of his cathedral church, to give an account to the Pope of the state of his diocess. He stood in need of certain bulls to authorise him to re-establish many things, which war and the prevalence of heresy had destroyed; he obtained them without any other support, than the exalted opinion, which had been very generally formed of his eminent sanctity. Such a series of fatigues, which

* Ibid. † Aug. of Sales. Book V.

he had undergone, justly demanded some share of repose; but this great prelate, incapable of bestowing his attention on any object but the sanctification of his flock, had no sooner returned home, than he composed instructions for confessors. These monuments of his zeal can never be viewed, without exciting a conviction, that if they exhibit great mildness, they by no means present that spirit of relaxation, which some have rashly ascribed to this distinguished prelate. No sooner had he completed this work, than he prepared to preach the lent at Annecy. He acquitted himself of this duty with his usual zeal. He was acquainted with the disorders of his people; he knew the proper remedies; his example seconded his instructions, and he required no observances of others, which he did not himself practice with the utmost exactness. God gave to his labours a more abundant benediction than on other occasions; no sinners were found so hardened in guilt, as to resist the force of the spirit, which spoke by his mouth. He began their conversion by his public discourses; he completed and confirmed the work in private conferences. That was his leading business; and he was indefatigable in his endeavours, when he had to hear or to console a sinner.

* The holidays of Easter had now elapsed, and the President Favre being at Annecy, they concerted together a plan of an academy for lectures in philosophy, theology, jurisprudence, mathematics and polite literature. They both excelled in all these sciences; and no persons could be better qualified to carry such a design into execution. Two motives led them to form such an establishment; the first was, their conviction, that nothing has a stronger tendency to introduce and foster licentiousness in a city than idleness; the other was, that Annecy and the neighbourhood abounded in persons of good parts, who, from a want of proper culture, could not make that progress in learning, to which their talents were equal. When all preparatory steps had been taken for the execution of this design, they wrote to the Duke of Savoy, to request him to grant to this academy, certain privileges for the encouragement of the subjects in the attainment of the proposed object. The Duke acceded to the request; and the Duke of Nemours was desired to be the protector of the society. Francis was appointed the next protector in rank, and his successors were to enjoy the same right. The statutes were drawn up; two persons of tried abilities

* Aug. of Sales *ibid.* Anon. Book II.

were chosen to direct the pursuits; and the holy prelate opened the first assembly by a most eloquent discourse. The President Favre opened the second meeting. The society was established in this manner; and the holy prelate derived from it the proposed advantages.

Some time after, John Francis of Sales returned from Rome with the bulls, which had been solicited, and with letters from his Holiness and Cardinal Pamphilus. Those from the Cardinal contained only general expressions of congratulation on the incessant pains, which the holy prelate bestowed on the re-establishment of faith and piety in his diocess. Those from the Pope were accompanied with an apostolical commission to reform certain monasteries, concerning which he had before written. The Cardinal Arrigon wrote to him about the same time, in the name of his Holiness, to know his opinion concerning the celebrated question *de Auxiliis*, or on predestination, and on the manner in which grace concurs with human liberty.

This question, after having been long agitated in the schools, had at length been referred by the sons of St. Dominic to the tribunal of Clement VIII.

* The Jesuits were their opponents. The former maintained predetermining decrees; the latter supported a milder system, which is known in the schools by the name of *Scientia Media*. The Pope, who was well versed in polemical divinity, was determined thoroughly to investigate the question; he established for that purpose a congregation composed of the most learned cardinals and distinguished theologians, at which he himself presided. The parties frequently met; the disputes were conducted on both sides with considerable warmth; but the Pope died, before any decision could be framed on the question. Paul V. having been elected in the place of Clement VIII. the business was resumed with redoubled vehemence; it was no longer a discussion between theologians; it became in some measure, an affair of state. The steps which were taken on this occasion, and which betrayed much heat, in an affair doubtless important, attracted additional consideration to the personal talents of the Pope. He was determined not to proceed to any decision without consulting the most learned men in Europe; and on that account Cardinal Arrigon wrote in his name to the Bishop of Geneva, to know his sentiments on this celebrated question,

* In the beginning of the year 1600.

which now began to divide the Catholic theologians.

* Francis by no means imitated the conduct of most of those, who were consulted by his Holiness. Some had pronounced in favour of predetermining decrees; others adopted the milder system. The holy prelate steered a different course; he replied to the Cardinal, that after having thoroughly investigated the merits of the question, he found on both sides such difficulties, as alarmed him; that the time was not favourable to the decision of such a controversy; that the minds of men were too much heated to submit peaceably to a sentence of condemnation; that a due respect for the Holy See, doubtless required their obedience, but that the expedient was not safe; that it was unseasonable to put their submission to that trial; that it was a far better plan, to labour to make a good use of grace, than to raise disputes on the subject, which have always injured charity, and disturbed the peace of the Church. Francis observed the same moderation towards both parties. It is certain, that his mind was not so far in suspense on the merits of the question, as not to incline more to one than to

* Aug. of Sales. Book V.

the other; and this sentiment clearly appears from his treatise on the love of God.

In the mean time he received with equal kindness both Dominicans and Jesuits; he was convinced, that the disputes were conducted on both sides with sincerity, and he did not think, that his opinion should be a law for others. He blamed in strong terms that spirit of party, which occasions an easy transition from a hatred of opinions to a dislike of persons. The law of charity, so strongly enforced in the scripture, he called the supreme law, and the most inviolable of all laws, to which every consideration should yield. He could never endure, that Catholics living in the unity of the Church, should be stigmatised as heretics, on account of opinions, on which the Church had not pronounced. "What," said he on these occasions, "do we belong to Paul, to Apollo, or to Cephas? do we not belong to Jesus Christ? Have Paul, Apollo and Cephas, been crucified for us? have they redeemed us? or have we been baptised in their names?" Not only did he disapprove of the practice of charging with heresy those, whom the Church had not deprived of her communion, but he disliked the custom of mutually appropriating to each other the names of Sects. "Christian," said he, "is my

name, Catholic is my surname." Such ought to be the language of those, who sincerely love the Church of Jesus Christ.

Some time after Francis had sent to his Holiness his opinion on the question de Auxiliis, he departed from Annecy to proceed to the extremity of his diocess, in order to visit many parishes, which he believed had not been sufficiently benefitted by his general visitation. He was persuaded that a first visit is scarcely sufficient to furnish a general and superficial acquaintance with affairs, and with the wants of the people; that it was not enough to frame useful ordinances, but that it became necessary to enforce the execution. Experience had taught him, that it was sometimes requisite to add or to retrench; and that there are few general laws which are not to be adapted to the circumstances of time and to the peculiar wants of individuals. God gave a blessing to the care of this vigilant prelate; he completed the re-establishment of thirty-three parishes, in situations in which eleven years before, ministers only of the reformation had appeared. "I was," says he in one of his letters, "engaged alone in preaching during three years, amidst all the contradictions, which can be conceived; but God has favoured me with an ample recompense in this last journey; for

before there were only a hundred Catholics in those parts, and now there are but as many Huguenots."

* Francis was engaged in visiting different parts of his diocese, with all the gratification, which the union of so many souls to the Catholic Church was capable of inspiring, when he received letters conveying the intelligence of the death of Jane of Sales, the youngest of his sisters, but the one whom he loved with the greatest tenderness. Madam de Chantal, on her arrival at Annecy, had requested permission, to have for some time the young lady with her; and Francis, believing that he could not procure for her a better education, than that which the virtuous widow was capable of giving, had confided his sister to her charge. She had no sooner reached Montelon, the place where Madam de Chantal at that time resided, than she was seized with a fever accompanied with a dysentery. The regard which Madam de Chantal had for her, induced her to use every expedient to comfort and serve her youthful friend; but all her kind attention and every remedy proved useless; and the young lady died between the age of fourteen and fifteen, in

* Aug. of Sales. Book V.

the bloom of beauty, genteel in her person, of great sweetness of disposition, and blest with great sense and piety. Madam de Chantal experienced the deepest sensibility at the loss; and expressed it to the holy prelate on conveying the melancholy intelligence. Francis, though he was deeply afflicted, for it is not the property of virtue to be destitute of feeling and affection for those with whom God has united us by the ties of blood, though he greatly felt the loss, he thought the affliction of Madam de Chantal excessive. He reproved her on that account, and consoled her at the same time, but in terms, which mark his character so strongly, as to deserve insertion. "I observe," said he to her by letter, "that you possess a warm heart, which loves and ardently desires its object; and for such a disposition I cannot but feel regard; for of what value is a cold and insensible heart? It is necessary however, my dear daughter, to aim at self-command, and for that purpose to make every morning a firm resolution to love the will of God on the most trying occasions."

He describes in another place his sentiments on this loss; he says, that he had interrupted his visits, to go and console his mother and brothers, whom he knew to be much affected with the event,

and that he himself had felt very acutely in consequence of the affliction of the family. He acknowledges, that in all this, there was too much of human feeling. But the Saints are very rigorous judges of their own conduct ; and this will appear from the manner in which he expresses his sentiments. " As for me," says he, " O ! live Jesus, I will always adhere to Divine Providence. He does all well, and disposes of all things for the best. What a happiness for this girl, to have been taken from the world, before malice had perverted her mind, and to have left a corrupted place, before she had been tainted with its contagion." True piety, we repeat, does not require that the soul should be devoid of feeling and compassion. Jesus Christ, the great model of the Saints, did not think it unbecoming to shed a tear on the tomb of Lazarus whom he loved ; he was moved to compassion at the affliction of his sisters. It is therefore lawful to experience sensibility ; but it ought to be shewn in a moderate degree, without excess or extravagance, and with perpetual submission to the will of God. An unrelenting sorrow, that listens to no suggestions, that never regards the hand, which gives the stroke of affliction, must be extremely liable to censure ; it is seldom unaccompanied with murmurs against the Divine disposal, which is always wise, and

always full of tenderness; and such conduct should be avoided with extreme vigilance. Madam de Chantal profited by the advice of the holy prelate; she submitted to the orders of God; but she did not consider herself released from her obligations to the house of Sales; she thought herself obliged to make some reparation to that illustrious family for the loss it had recently suffered, and this idea led to a resolution, which she formed of giving one of her daughters in marriage to one of the brothers of the holy bishop. This plan was executed in proper time with the consent of the family, which deemed itself honoured by so great an alliance.

* Francis on his side, after having devoted a suitable time to the consolation of his mother and family, recommenced his visitation, and again interrupted it to preach the lent at Annecy. The year following, 1608, he preached the lent at Rumilly, a small town of Savoy, where he had been long expected. He there received letters from the Duke of Savoy, which obliged him, at the conclusion of lent, to repair to Thonon on pressing business. There stands on record a circumstance on this occasion, which indicates a

* Aug. of Sales. Book V.

great spirit of mortification. He was lodging with one of his friends; the company was seated at table; but one of the attendants by mistake had put in the salt-cellar flour instead of salt. The others of the party soon perceived the mistake; but the holy prelate, accustomed to pay no attention to what he was eating, continued to make use of flour instead of salt, and would not have been aware of the circumstance, if the master of the house, on ordering the mistake to be rectified, had not made an apology. The holy prelate, who concealed his virtues with as much care as others shew to hide their defects, was somewhat mortified that his indifference to whatever was placed before him should be thus noticed, and changed abruptly the conversation; but the respect entertained for him induced the company to suppress any expression of their opinion concerning a life, which while it exhibited nothing extraordinary, was in reality a continued series of mortification.

* Francis heard about this time, that a religious man belonging to a very austere order, had done him a very unpleasant service in a communication with his Holiness. He had given information by letter, that the Bishop of Geneva was not

* Aug. of Sales. Book V. Anon. Book II.

sufficiently attentive to banish heretical books from his diocess; that performances of the most dangerous kind were daily circulated from Geneva, which were received and read with avidity by the new Catholics; and that if this disorder continued, nothing could be expected but a deplorable relapse of these unfortunate persons into their ancient errors. It would be difficult to assign the reason, which led this religious man to advance such a calumny. All that is known of him is, that he had been employed in the diocess as a missionary; that he was a man of extravagant zeal, who was deficient in prudence; and never could endure that any discreet and prudential precautions should be observed towards the Calvinists. His learning was below mediocrity; and was accompanied with all that presumption, which persons of this description usually display; a character extremely dangerous, and perfectly opposed to that of the holy prelate. He had often exercised the patience of the Bishop; and would have proceeded long in the same manner, if from a conviction that his services were more hurtful than advantageous, the holy man had not requested his superiors to recal him. Humility never belonged exclusively to any situation; in vain is a public profession made of that virtue; self-love finds singular resources; what it loses on one side, it gains on another;

all events serve to feed the flame, even what appears calculated to extinguish it. The religious man in question considered his recal by his superiors, as an injury, which he had received from the Bishop of Geneva; and this apparently gave birth to his calumny. He could not well have selected an accusation against the holy prelate, more remote from all appearance of truth. His vigilance in this particular could not be exceeded; and as he was persuaded, that bad books are ever peculiarly calculated to corrupt the mind and the heart, he spared no pains to prevent their circulation. But hatred is ever blind in its attempts. As the accusation came from a distance, it was not easy to ascertain the falsehood; at least that was the calculation of the religious, and on this dangerous principle, he without difficulty became the accuser of a holy Bishop, of whose innocence he was well aware, as he had laboured in his diocese, and must have witnessed many circumstances, which left no doubt on the subject.

END OF THE FIFTH BOOK.

THE LIFE

OF

Saint Francis of Sales.

BOOK VI.

VOL. II.

I

C O N T E N T S

OF THE

SIXTH BOOK.

ATTEMPTS are made in vain to asperse the reputation of St. Francis of Sales at Rome by calumnies.... He receives fresh marks of esteem and confidence from the Pope....He reforms, in quality of Apostolical commissary, the celebrated Convent of Nuns of Puy d' Orbe.... Great contests between the Archdukes and the clergy of Franche-Comté relative to the salt-pits....St. Francis of Sales receives a brief from his Holiness, who commissions him, in conjunction with the Bishop of Bâle, to adjust the difference....He acquits himself of the commission to the satisfaction of both parties....The Archdukes make him magnificent presents....He is named by the Pope to reform the Convent of Nuns of St. Catherine....He continues the visitation of his diocess....He composes the Introduction to a Devout Life....The occasion of this work.... It is received by the public with great applause, and

translated into all the languages of Europe....Advantageous testimony given of it by James I. King of Great Britain....A religious person carries his violence so far, as to burn it in the pulpit before a great audience.... The holy prelate suffers this injury with his usual meekness....His sentiments on revenge....Great charities which he bestows on Catholics and on Calvinists....He labours at the reformation of the Abbey of Talloires, and succeeds by his extreme mildness, after encountering many difficulties....He performs the ceremony of the consecration of the celebrated Peter Camus, Bishop of Bellay.... A close intimacy is formed between them, which is terminated only with their lives....Learned and Christian conversations, which they hold together....St. Francis of Sales passes through Geneva at the imminent hazard of his life, to go and re-establish the Catholic religion in the bailiwick of Gex....Firmness of the holy prelate; great courage, which he displays on this occasion....The Duke of Savoy takes offence at this journey.....He justifies himself and regains his confidence....He assists at the death of his mother the Countess of Sales....Pious sentiments which he discovers on this occasion....He is informed of the death of Henry IV....Commendation which he bestows on this Prince....Christian reflections on the death of the Great....He founds the Order of the Visitation. His humility leads him to think of taking a Coadjutor.... Christian reasons which induce him to select his brother John Francis of Sales....Establishment of the Barnabites at Annecy....He composes the Treatise of the Love of God....Plan and purport of this work....The Emperor invites him to the Diet of Ratisbon....He declines the honour...His reasons for not repairing to that place.... Dreadful calumny against the holy prelate....His meekness and patience on this occasion....Terrible death of the ca-

lumniator, who is constrained to acknowledge the calumny, and to repair his injured honour....He preaches the lent twice at Grenoble, and labours at the conversion of the Duke of Lesdiguieres, who was afterwards Constable....He proceeds to the great Carthusian establishment....Pious conversations which he holds with those holy solitaires....He returns to Annecy to receive his brother, the Bishop of Chalcedon and his Coadjutor....They govern in conjunction the diocese of Geneva....Extreme mildness of the holy prelate....Miraculous cure of a madman....He is chosen by the Duke of Savoy, to accompany his son the Cardinal, to the court of France....An offer is made to him in the name of the King of the Coadjutorship of Paris; he declines it....Advice full of firmness, which he gives to the Cardinal of Rets....Christina of France, Princess of Piedmont, chooses him for her first almoner....Conditions on which he accepts the charge....General esteem of Paris, of the court of France, and of the Princess of Piedmont for the holy bishop....He accompanies the Princess to Annecy, and remains in his diocese....Acts of piety and disinterestedness which he performs at his return....He goes to preside in the name of the Pope at the general chapter of the Feuillans, and re-establishes peace in that holy order....Heroic action which he performs at Turin....He returns to his diocese.

THE LIFE
OF
SAINT FRANCIS OF SALES,
BISHOP AND PRINCE
OF GENEVA.

BOOK THE SIXTH.

THE high reputation, which Francis enjoyed at Rome, completely destroyed the credit of the calumny, which had been raised. The Pope was less disposed than any other to believe the charge; and indeed there was so little appearance of probability, that a Prelate, who had shewed such distinguished zeal for the faith, should neglect a precaution, in which its existence among his flock was involved, that it appears a matter of extreme surprise, how his enemies should select this mode of attack, against which his justification became so obvious. But malice is ever blind; and besides it was no easy task to invent a charge against a Bishop of so irreproachable a character. Francis deviated from his usual prac-

tice on this occasion. An invincible patience was the weapon, which he generally opposed to the injuries of his adversaries; but as this affair concerned his zeal for religion, and the honour of his character, he wrote in a forcible manner to a Cardinal, with whom he was intimately connected; and by the minutes of his visitation, of which copies were transmitted to Rome, he justified the diligence and the precautions, which he had shewn in banishing heretical books from his diocese. As to the religious man, who had accused him so falsely, though he had been named to him, the holy prelate betrayed no kind of resentment towards him, nor ever made any complaints on the subject to his superiors, but was satisfied with sending this justification to the Pope. His Holiness informed by the Cardinal of the subject contained in the communication of Francis, thought it a duty to bestow on him some public marks of esteem and confidence; with this view he employed him in two very honourable commissions; one regarded the reformation of the celebrated convent of the Nuns of Puy d' Orbe; and by the other, he was associated with the Bishop of Bâle, to adjust in quality of Apostolical commissary, the difference which had long subsisted between the Archdukes and the clergy of Franche Comté, relative to the salt-pits.

In order to carry into effect the injunction of his Holiness, he repaired to the Abbey of Puy d'Orbe. He began his visit by very zealous exhortations; it was his favourite maxim, that it was requisite to convince the mind of the necessity of reformation, before the work could be undertaken. He observed on this subject, that liberty is so congenial to the heart of man, that an attachment to it perpetually recurs; that whatever is undertaken in opposition to this spirit, cannot be of long duration, and that a yoke which is borne with constraint, is soon shaken off; that in order to enlighten the mind, some impression must be made on the will, if we hope to gain the heart, and lay a solid foundation of a pious establishment. Agreeably to these principles, he had several conferences with the Nuns; he convinced them of the inconveniences, which necessarily resulted from the liberty, that had been introduced into their convent; and he succeeded in persuading them, that when once the world had been relinquished, its spirit should never be resumed; that the only happiness, which they could expect to enjoy in this world, must necessarily arise from peace of conscience, and tranquillity of heart, and that these blessings could be ensured only by an attachment to their rule, and the performance of their duty. When the mind

was once convinced, his incomparable meekness found an avenue to the heart. He explained to these religious ladies, that his commission directed him to re-establish in their convent the rule of St. Benedict in all its extent; but he assured them, that it was not his intention to lead them instantaneously from one extreme to another; that he would shew proper condescension, and that he would undertake for that purpose to obtain the concurrence of his Holiness. He accordingly exempted them from some corporal austerities, but only with a view to form them to the practice of interior virtues, such as retirement, assiduity in prayer, the exercise of the presence of God, humility and charity, which an interested spirit and an intercourse with the world had almost banished from that Abbey; he removed idleness which had been introduced by the repeated visits of worldly persons; he regulated the employment of their time, and the stated occupations of each day; finally he made a code of regulations, distinguished by prudence, meekness and charity, and enforced their observance. God gave a blessing to his care and his zeal; the convent assumed a new appearance; christian virtue and religious perfection were seen to revive in that house, and its members now edified the

public, in the same proportion as they had before given scandal by an ill-judged liberty.

* When this affair was adjusted, he proceeded to the Abbey of Beaume, where the Bishop of Bâle and the agents of the parties were waiting for him to terminate the difference, which has been mentioned between the Archdukes of Flanders, and the clergy of Franche Comté. This business had been long depending; and the following is the history of the transaction. The salt-pits of Burgundy had for a long period of time, been divided between the Counts of that province and the clergy; the right was incontestable, and had been confirmed by the possession of many centuries. Philip II. King of Spain, in quality of Count of Burgundy, had however called in question the claim of the clergy; but he afterwards acknowledged the justice of their pretensions; and an agreement was formed, by which the clergy were to renounce the property of the salt-pits, and the king was to bind himself and his successors for ever, to furnish a certain quantity of salt, which was settled by arbitration. Affairs remained for some time in this situation to the satisfaction of both parties. But the successors

* Aug. of Sales. Book VI. Anon. Book II.

of those, who had engaged in this treaty, asserted that the interests of the clergy had not been sufficiently attended to; that a considerable infraction of the articles had taken place, and that the clergy by no means received the quantity of salt, which they had derived from that source before they surrendered the property which they shared in the pits to the King. The King admitted the fact; but he replied, that no injustice was on that account done to the clergy; that being released by the terms of the treaty from the charges, which he was obliged to bear, both to keep the pits in order, and to prepare the salt, it was not just, that they should demand the same quantity, as they received before the treaty was framed.

As the parties were unable to adjust the difference, an agreement was made to refer the whole business to the decision of Pope Clement VIII. His Holiness named as his commissaries the Archbishop and the Dean of Besançon; but the commission remained without effect by the death of the King and that of the Pope, which followed shortly after. Philip III. having succeeded to Philip II. and Paul V. to Clement VIII, the affair was prosecuted with additional vigour. But on a complaint from Philip III. that in the first commission parties concerned had been

given to him as judges, the Pope addressed the commission to the Bishops of Ast and Lausanne. The death of the latter destroyed the effect of the second commission. Finally at the solicitation of Albert of Austria and of Isabella Claire Eugenie, Archdukes of the Low Countries, and Counts of Burgundy, Princes distinguished by their piety, who conscientiously desired to do justice to the clergy of Franche Comté, the Pope named as his commissaries the Bishops of Bâle and of Geneva, to bring the matter to a final close.

Francis possessed talents for accommodating differences, of which he had exhibited many proofs; and to succeed in this business, required all his skill. The number of the parties interested in the discussion, the diversity of their claims, the great mass of documents necessarily to be examined, the intricacies of legal sophistry to be unravelled, the obscurity and embarrassment, in which the whole business by these means had been involved, all these circumstances rendered the work of accommodation extremely difficult. The application, the prudence, the penetration of the holy prelate surmounted these difficulties; he converted the quantity of salt, claimed by the clergy, into a sum of money, with which the domains of the Prince were to be charged; and

the property of the pits was to be invested in the Counts of Burgundy for ever. This arrangement met the wishes of the Archdukes; they testified their gratitude by letters full of esteem and consideration; and to these expressions of kindness, they added a present worthy of their exalted rank. It consisted of a silver chapel, with every necessary ornament for the service of the altar; and to this were added many superb pieces of plate for his table. Francis had a natural aversion to presents; and as it clearly appears from the former parts of this history, he could never be induced to accept them. The purity of his motives did not allow him to pay the smallest regard to his private interest; his virtue and the natural generosity of his temper, equally concurred to promote this disinterested disposition. However the quality of the persons, who offered the presents, and other accompanying circumstances, prevented him from declining the favour; but, as it will appear from the subsequent part of the history, the poor derived greater benefit than himself from the donation.

* He had scarcely completed this commission from the Holy See, when he received another to

* Anon. Book II.

reform the convent of St. Catherine. He found not this task so easy, as the business relative to the house of Puy d' Orbe. Some of the Nuns opposed his operations; and loudly declared that they ought not to be bound by any observances, which they had not found established at their profession. Francis who was always an enemy of violence, did not think it prudent to have recourse to constraint; he contented himself with removing some abuses, which had been gradually introduced into the house, and which in his opinion neither time nor custom could justify. But having found many of the members well disposed to lead a more perfect life, he withdrew them from this convent, and established them at Seissel, a town in his diocess. He joined to the rule of St. Bernard, which they professed, excellent constitutions, which they observe at the present time, and enforce in the houses, which have been since established.

After these commissions had been executed, Francis continued to visit some parishes, which required his attention and presence; he then returned to Annecy, to complete his incomparable book, *The Introduction to a Devout Life*; a work so useful and in such high estimation, as to render all commendation unnecessary; it will

therefore be sufficient to relate the motives and the occasion of this great performance.* The reader must already have remarked, that God had rendered the conversion of heretics and sinners in some measure subservient to the instructions of the holy prelate; it has likewise appeared, that he never lost sight of those, whom God had called by his ministry to a more regular and holy life; and that after having begotten them to Jesus Christ by the word of life, he continued to feed them, in the language of the Apostle, either with milk or with solid food, agreeably to their strength or their wants.† A lady of quality in Savoy, who was closely connected with him, and who possessed a mind superior to her sex, placed herself under his direction. The holy prelate, who had observed in her a great fund of talents and of virtue, bestowed great pains on her instruction, and committed to writing the advice which he had repeatedly given her, both for the purpose of assisting her memory, and of saving the trouble of repetition. But shortly after, some legal proceedings called her to Chamberry, and the stay she was obliged to make in that city, necessarily interrupted all oral communication with her di-

* Aug. of Sales. Book VI. Anon. Book II.

† Preface, to the Introduction.

rector; he therefore permitted her to write to him, and regularly answered her letters, without any other view but for her private direction, and without the smallest idea, that his instructions were ever to appear before the public. But the Providence of God had other designs. This lady collected all the letters, and joining them to the other instructions, which she had received from the holy prelate, shewed the whole to the father Fourrier, a Jesuit, whom she had taken for her director, and who was at that time rector of the college of Chamberry. This pious and learned religious admired the solidity of the instructions contained in these letters and papers, and thinking them useful in the extreme for the conduct of persons in the world, he wrote to the holy prelate to beg him to give them the last finish, and form them into a complete work. The holy bishop declined the task; his profound humility did not permit him to think, that a work of such supposed utility could be formed from his letters and loose papers. The father Fourrier renewed his entreaties, and threatened to publish to the world his letters and instructions in the form, in which they then appeared, if he could not induce him to comply with a request, which he thought would be attended with such supernumerary advantages.

About the same time Henry IV. engaged one day in a conversation with Deshayes, the intimate friend of Francis at the Court of France, assured him, that he beheld with deep concern the spirit of libertinism, which had been introduced into the court. He observed to him, that after having given to the subject the fullest consideration, he believed the evil to originate in two causes; the first was, that the great proportion of mankind entertained on the subject of religion very opposite sentiments, but which produced nearly the same practical effects; that some deemed it to be unworthy of God, to pay any attention to human actions, and to shew any displeasure at their conduct; that others on the contrary were persuaded that nothing escaped His knowledge, but that He watches over us only to punish our offences; that He pardons no crime, or at least that to recover His favour, such efforts are to be made, as are superior to the weakness of human nature. The first delusion, added the King, can be productive only of the most frightful disorders; but the second occasions the most singular perplexities, and leads often to despair; a situation, from which it becomes peculiarly difficult to recover, as directors themselves but too frequently make the road of virtue so rough and impassable, that most men are deterred from even aspiring to

walk in it. This, in my judgment, added this Great Prince, is the second cause of the disorders of mankind; for conceiving a disgust for piety, and deeming its practice impossible, or at least so difficult, as to preclude all hopes of attaining the summit of virtue, they never think of changing their lives, postpone their conversion till death, by which they are surprised, and thus are prevented from executing any good purpose. I should therefore wish, continued the King, that the first of these descriptions of persons should be convinced of so fatal an error, that they should be frightened, that they should be filled with alarm; for they certainly do not deserve to be treated so tenderly as the others; but I should greatly desire that every effort should be made, to calm the inquietude of the other class of persons; that their despair should be obviated, by representing God as a being infinitely good, who regards our weaknesses with compassion, who considers us as his children, returning to their father, who anticipates our desires, who supports us in our good purposes, who wishes the perdition of no one, but who on the contrary desires that all men may be saved. Finally, I should not wish to see sinners flattered, by a weak conduct or by timid condescension, which can promote only their ruin; but I should not approve of that

method of treatment, which would disgust them by unseasonable rigour, or which would represent virtue in such odious colours, as to discourage its practice.

Deshayes was about to interrupt the King, not for the purpose of contradicting his observations, though he fully enjoyed that privilege, when His Majesty resumed his discourse, and said, that he had always wished that some able person would lay down a plan of a Christian life for people in the world agreeably to their calling; that he would have such a plan to be equally remote from the relaxation of latter times, and from a disgusting severity incompatible with their engagements; that it should be exact, judicious, and such as persons belonging to the court and the higher classes, without excepting even Kings and Princes, might adopt; that he had thought of the Bishop of Geneva, as a person qualified to execute such a task; that he did not believe there was a person in the world more capable of succeeding in such an attempt, and that he commissioned him to write to the Bishop on the subject in his name. Deshayes performed the commission; the holy prelate convinced that God required of him, what the father Fourrier had often represented to him so forcibly, consented that the notes and

letters, which have been mentioned, should be sent back ; and with those materials he composed the excellent work, called *The Introduction to a Devout Life*, which he addresses to Philothea, or the devout soul. His intention was to acknowledge in the preface, that His Most Christian Majesty had suggested the plan ; but that Great Prince forbade any such acknowledgment, and insisted that the whole merit should be ascribed to the Bishop. This appears from several letters, which passed on the occasion.

* It would be difficult to describe the high estimation, in which the book was held on its very first appearance. Catholics as well as Calvinists, whose opinions were so different on other subjects, were unanimous in their commendations of this inimitable performance. It contributed to recal some to the knowledge of truth, and others to a better life ; no sooner had it been published in the original French, than it was translated into every language of Europe. There are few books, of which editions have been multiplied with such rapidity ; at the present time it is in the hands of every one, and held in as great estimation as ever ; and though it possesses not that purity of language, which in that state of French lite-

* Aug. of Sales. Book VI.. Anon. Book II.

rature was ascribed to it, it has lost nothing of its value. Henry IV. a Prince of an exquisite judgment, acknowledged that it surpassed his expectations; he bestowed on it invariably the greatest commendation. Mary of Medici, his royal consort, did not conceive for it less esteem; this she testified by sending a copy to James I. King of Great Britain. That Sovereign, one of the most learned that ever filled the English throne, notwithstanding his separation from the Church of Rome, and his prepossessions against Catholic writers, read it very assiduously, and always carried it with him. He observed on the subject of this work, that those of his communion, who attempted to write, never displayed that unction, which is diffused over this book; and he acknowledged, that it was one of the striking marks of the spirit of God, with which the author was animated in the composition. Peter de Villars, Archbishop of Vienne, and Metropolitan of Geneva, wrote to the holy prelate to congratulate him on the occasion. His letter is still extant, and contains such commendations, as admit of no addition. It would exceed the bounds of history to record all that was said and written in its favour.

- However, as it is not given to all, to form a correct judgment of the best things, and as there

is a certain description of persons, who take pride in reasoning differently from the rest of mankind, there was at that time a religious man, belonging to one of the most austere orders in the Church, who undertook to decry this excellent performance. He did something worse; for he ascended the pulpit, and after declaiming against this work in a strain to excite horror, he drew the book from his sleeve, and calling for a wax taper, burnt it publicly before his audience. This action ruined the reputation of the preacher, without injuring the work; it continued to be held in equal estimation, and equally to be the favourite of the public. What had roused the feelings of this religious man was, that the work appeared to permit balls, convivial wit and innocent raillery. This is not the proper place to justify the illustrious author; that task must be postponed to the eighth book of this history; but it is impossible not to refrain from remarking, that the zeal which is not under the influence of discretion, is always dangerous; that it fastens on every object; that it spares neither persons nor rank; that it is wholly deficient in respect and reverence; that it carries every thing to an excess, and attentive only on its own prepossessions, which are often unjust and without the smallest foundation, the

more it displays of temerity; the more it applauds its own hasty actions.

Francis being informed of the singular manner, in which this religious man had treated his book, displayed a degree of meekness and condescension, perhaps without example. The unlimited delicacy of an author with respect to his own productions is well known; the tenderness of parents to their children is perhaps but a faint representation of his feelings; it is a tender part, that is never touched with impunity. Francis was perfectly free from this sensibility, which falls to the share of the greatest part of mankind, but which arises from an inexhaustible fund of self love, and from a degree of blind vanity, which may be combated, but is seldom overcome; not being able to justify the presumptuous conduct of this religious man, he excused his intention.* He says, with such a tone of moderation, as if the work of another had been concerned, that he could have wished to have received a direct statement of the objections of this religious man to his book; that as he had advanced nothing but on good authority, the good man might probably have yielded to his

* St. Francis of Sale's Preface to the Treatise on the love of God.

reasons, or that he himself might have adopted the reasoning of the objector; that after all that could be said, no writer had ever satisfied the general taste of the world; that as the dispositions of men are so various, and their manner of judging so different, it was not possible that a work should meet with such general approbation, as not to excite some censure; that he had fully expected it, and that he was much more surprised to meet but with one angry critic, than if he had been assailed by a greater number.

- Persons were not wanting, who observed to him, that in truth this religious man was perfectly master of his own sentiments, and that it never could be construed into a crime to have disapproved of his book; but that nothing could justify an action so violent as to burn it in the pulpit; that a religious man without rank could not be the judge of the doctrine of a Bishop, and that such a notorious act exhibited insupportable temerity; that Christian patience had certain limits; and that, though it were only to do justice to the honour due to his character, he ought to complain to the superiors of this man, and to demand justice. There are few persons, who would not have yielded to such reasons, and who under the pretext of vindicating character, would not have

enjoyed a secret pleasure in procuring the punishment of an injury directed against their persons. But the holy prelate possessed a fund of meekness, which rendered him averse to such artificial reasoning; he was well acquainted with the artifices of self-love; he knew that while it apparently leads us to forget ourselves, it in reality draws us more securely to that point; that the vindication of character is but a pretext, and that the feelings are wholly interested in favour of the offended person.

These reasons induced him to reply to his friends, that there was so much connection between sentiments and actions, that nothing would be found more difficult than to avoid a transition from one to the other; that these distinctions between character and person were of a very delicate texture; that self-love was too much interested in the concern not to be gratified; that the Gospel was made for Bishops as well as for other Christians; that it commanded all mankind to repay evil with good, and though the command had not been so express, he felt it base and dishonourable to take revenge upon a man, whose station rendered him weaker than himself. But if the forbearance of Francis proved thus edifying, the conduct of the superiors of this religious person, was no inconsi-

derable source of scandal. His action had been so public, that they must have been apprised of it; they ought accordingly themselves to have done justice without any solicitation. The character, the birth, the merit, the high opinion which had been formed of the sanctity of the offended person, even his moderation, and the public applause which had been bestowed on his work, that had been thus injuriously treated, all these circumstances demanded such a reparation; they however remained silent on the occasion; a proof sufficiently clear, that certain sallies, which appear to be indulged by individuals, but too frequently have the secret approbation of the whole body. But God raised up to the holy prelate an avenger, who did not so easily pardon the injury, which had been committed against his master and his friend; for these were the appellations, which he generally used. This was the celebrated Peter Camus, Bishop of Belley, whose writings exhibit some of those vigorous and animated strokes, those select terms of reproach, which he liberally bestows on all occasions, on those who had treated his master with such disrespect. Francis, who never wished to avenge himself, would never have suffered another to perform the office; but death had given full liberty to the resentment of his friend, who was determined not to spare those,

who had shewn so little regard to the holy prelate.

* The reputation which Francis had acquired by The Introduction to a Devout Life, had reached Geneva in spite of the vigilant attention of the ministers, and had attracted to Annecy persons of all ranks in society, who crowded thither to receive instruction. The charity of the holy prelate was not confined to the care of the soul, but was extended to the wants of the body, and in this laudable object he nearly exhausted his means. Among the persons whom he gained to Christ, there was a young man of an excellent understanding, who had commenced his studies with success; Francis sent him to the college of the Jesuits at Chamberry, regularly paid his pension, and supported him for three years; after which term he provided him with an establishment. Another he enabled to follow a profession, defrayed the charges of his apprenticeship, and purchased his chartered privilege; two others he assisted to perform a journey to Rome, and gave them recommendations to his friends. Such was his treatment of those among the converts, who stood in need of his assistance; and he used to

* Aug. of Sales. Book VI.

remark on that subject, that indigence was the most dangerous temptation to neophytes.

The ancient Catholics did not less share his extensive charities. On this subject is recorded an action of too edifying a nature to be omitted. As he was one day in his apartment engaged in the affairs of his diocess, a man in a very mean dress was introduced on some business; the cold was so intense, that the poor man was completely pierced with it, and trembled as he spoke. Francis asked him, if he had no better clothes? The poor man replied, that he had no better apparel than what he wore. Francis was moved to compassion; and without any request on the part of this distressed man, told him to wait, went into his wardrobe with an intention to look for the dress, which the cold had constrained him to change the day before for warmer clothes, fully determined to give them away; but not finding them, and being without money, which was a very ordinary case, he took off the dress, which he then wore under his cassock, made up a packet, and delivered it to the unfortunate object, strongly recommending to him to conceal it, and not to say a word of it to any person. As to himself, he remained the rest of the day in his cassock only, exposed to the most rigorous cold; and would

have continued to suffer that inconvenience, if his valet had not perceived the circumstance, and brought him another dress. The steward of his household, who with difficulty was enabled to provide for his subsistence and his charities, often spoke to him in a tone of complaint, for his zeal was carried to that length, and threatened to leave him; but the kind manner of the holy prelate was literally irresistible; he would reply with his usual mildness, "You are perfectly right, I am wholly incorrigible; and what is worse, there is every appearance that I shall continue so." Sometimes he would point to his crucifix, and say: "Can we refuse any thing to a God, who reduced himself to that state for the love of us." The steward, who was a man of a good character, retired in confusion at his own sallies of displeasure; and on meeting any of the other servants, he would say, "Our master is a Saint, but he will bring us to an alms-house, and go himself first, if he continues in his present habits." It is indeed surprising, how with so small a revenue, he could devote so much money to charities; the frugal life, which he led, was almost his only resource; and this is a clear proof, that when all useless expense is retrenched, more may be done with a moderate income, than with con-

siderable property, which is not managed with economical attention.

* About this time, (1609) he undertook to reform the Abbey of Talloires, deeming it a duty not to suffer so near to his residence such disorders, as he had banished from more distant places. This Abbey follows the rule of St. Benedict, and is dependent on the Abbot of Savigny; it recognises as its founder Rodolphus the last King of Burgundy; the situation of the Abbey is exquisitely beautiful, on the banks of the lake of Annecy, at the extremity of a considerable village, which bears the same name. This monastery was at that period in a situation, similar to that of many others; after having proved for a length of time the retreat of a great number of Saints, it was become the abode of a few Monks without a superior, without order and without discipline; the beauty of the situation daily attracted visitors, and the intercourse with the world had corrupted the religious spirit, as the flight of all worldly society had sanctified their predecessors. Francis, after having long sighed before God on the subject, had made his complaints to the Abbot of Savigny, and had desired him to

* Aug. of Sales. Book VI. . . Anon. Book II.

restore order ; but whether that superior was apprehensive of hazarding his authority, or that he was not so much affected with the disorders as the holy prelate, he either had made no attempt for the purpose, or had made it without effect. Francis, who on suitable emergencies could display that firmness, which his ministry demanded, did not confine his zeal to these representations ; he applied to the Pope, and obtained a commission, which empowered him to reform the Abbey of Talloires. He examined his commission, and found in it a clause, which tied his hands, while it appeared to give him full powers to act ; for it was said in express terms, “ that by the presents, His Holiness did not mean to infringe the rights of the Abbot of Savigny.” This in effect gave him no authority, or only such a degree, as would be agreeable to the Abbot, who might overturn in an instant, all that he should have accomplished, with great time and much labour.

Francis shewed on this occasion, that when the interests of heaven were concerned, he did not possess those false notions of delicacy, which often prove fatal to the most holy and the best concerted enterprises ; he negotiated with the Abbot, and finding him determined not to sur-

render the smallest portion of his rights, he chose rather to act as his substitute in this concern, than to connive any longer at disorders, which he perceived must be lasting, if he should wait for the effectual interposition of the Abbot. Having removed this difficulty, Francis repaired to Tailloires, and began agreeably to his practice, by making to the assembled religious the most zealous exhortations; but he had to deal with active and rebellious spirits, obstinately attached to a fatal liberty, enemies of order, and prepared to go to any lengths, in order to support the dangerous prerogative which they held, of receiving the law from no human being. The holy prelate spared no pains to reclaim them to a sense of duty by lenient means; he exhorted them collectively and individually, but always without effect; at length wearied by so obstinate a resistance, he threatened to employ the authority of the Senate, and even of the Sovereign, to bring them to their duty. "You are determined," says he, "to ruin yourselves, and I am determined in spite of your opposition to save you."

The fear of man did on this occasion, what the fear of God had not been found sufficient to accomplish. The rebellious Monks yielded; and Francis availing himself of their submission, or-

dered them immediately to choose a prior; they unanimously concurred in selecting for that station, Nicolas de Coex, the only man of worth in the community, whom Providence by a species of miracle, had preserved from the general contagion. Francis perceived by this event, that God approved of his proceedings, and he entertained the fairest hopes of the ultimate success of his enterprises. But as wisdom and moderation guided all his steps, he thought that by a hasty execution of his designs, he should render them abortive, or that he should be obliged, in order to support them, to have recourse to rigorous measures, for which the mildness of his character gave him an unconquerable aversion. Accordingly, after having invested the new prior with all the authority, of which he stood in need, furnished him with proper advice, and made such regulations, as any man but moderately reasonable must have approved, he returned to Annecy, with a determination to repair again to Talloires, when God should manifest to him the period of mercy for these religious men.

The holy prelate had scarcely left Talloires, when these obstinate men repented of the contumaciousness which they had shewn; though they had not carried it to a great length. The new prior

was determined to hold a steady course. That alone was sufficient to excite a commotion against him; he was driven from the monastery, and obliged to take refuge in the village; the boldness of these members was thus carried to a great extremity; and Francis with all his mildness would never have suffered such a daring attempt. But it happens too often, that one crime draws on the perpetration of another. The rebels imagined that, in order to set the business of reformation at rest for ever, they had only to dispatch the prior. On this dangerous presumption, three of the most determined waited for him the next morning; and as he was leaving his lodgings, they each fired a pistol; they all missed their aim, and the prior escaped at the expense of fear. The deed was too public to be concealed, and of too dark a complexion not to meet with deserved punishment. Accordingly when their rage had somewhat subsided, they foresaw the fatal consequences of their conduct; they now thought of choosing a voluntary exile, and of preventing by their flight the terrors of justice, when it was represented to them that whatever was the enormity of their crime, the goodness of the Bishop of Geneva was still greater; that they had only to be their own accusers, and to testify that degree of repentance, which an action so atrocious demanded;

that they would move him to compassion, and would infallibly obtain their pardon. Every one appeared so perfectly convinced of the mild dispositions of the Bishop, that the culprits shewed no hesitation on the mode of proceeding; they instantly departed, threw themselves at his feet, and acquainted him with their crime with all the marks of grief apparently so sincere, that the holy prelate was softened to compassion. His heart could not withstand their tears; and whatever was the enormity of the action, he could not bring his mind to punish persons, who thus acted against themselves both as accusers and witnesses. But as it would have been dangerous to let them observe the whole impression, which piety made on his heart, he did violence to himself so far, as to make to them those reproaches which their crime deserved. The culprits replied by exaggerating their own guilt; they submitted to every satisfaction, which he should be willing to require, and they condemned themselves to do penance for their whole lives. Francis demanded nothing more of them than to receive the plan of reformation, which he intended to establish in their monastery; they promised to accept it, and on this condition they were favoured with their pardon, with an assurance that all legal proceedings against them should be prevented.

The holy Bishop was blamed for having pardoned with too much facility, a crime so atrocious as that of voluntary homicide, planned and executed by religious men and priests, as far as it depended on themselves, since chance or their want of skill prevented the effect. On this occasion a clergyman, who was a friend of his, observed: that he should wish to be Francis of Sales, when he should have to appear before the tribunal of God; but that he should not like to be responsible for the faults committed by the Bishop of Geneva from an excess of mildness. "You would not be less embarrassed," replied the holy prelate, "if you were to answer for Francis; but however that may be, I would rather fail by an excess of mildness, than by the other extreme of severity; in that I have the authority of Jesus Christ my master, who will be my judge, and I cannot be wrong in following Him." The day after he had pardoned these religious men, the prior came to make his complaints; but Francis anticipated the subject, by observing to him, that he was happy in enjoying an infallible means of obtaining the remission of his sins, unquestionably more enormous in the sight of God, than the attempt against himself. "Pardon," said he, "and you shall be pardoned. In the same measure that you measure to others, it shall be

measured to you." He added, that as to himself he had pardoned them ; that the prior had to do the same ; that he could assure him he never would find religious men more submissive, than those who had so cruelly offended him. The prior, who was a very good character, assured him that he pardoned them from his heart ; but he begged the holy prelate to reflect on the consequences of such an action, if it should remain unpunished. Francis replied, that he had made every calculation on the subject, and that in a short time, he would establish such perfect order in all respects, as would obviate every unpleasant consequence ; he afterwards loaded him with innumerable marks of esteem and affection, and dismissed him to resume his functions in his monastery. Some time after, Francis having verified before the senate the commission obtained from the Pope, and named a senator as commissary, repaired with him to Talloires, and obliged those who refused to receive the projected plan of reformation to accept of pensions and retire. Thus order was re-established in a monastery, which had for so long a period, scandalized the whole country.

Scarcely had Francis brought this great affair to a close, when he received letters from John Peter Camus, who was named to the Bishopric

of Belley; by these he was requested to repair to Belley to perform the ceremony of his consecration. His merit alone had raised him to the episcopacy; he was possessed of learning and piety, of great talents for fine writing, and still more for preaching; hence he was qualified to form that close intimacy, which afterwards subsisted between him and the holy prelate. By an unreserved intercourse with this great man, he acquired those lights, that zeal, that disinterestedness, that eminent piety, which afterwards rendered him one of the most distinguished and the most holy Bishops of the church of France. He frankly acknowledges, that after God he was indebted to Francis for his best attainments; and he never speaks of him, without giving him the appellation of his father, his master, his guide and his director. During the remainder of his life he undertook nothing of moment without consulting him, and he so impressed himself with his maxims and his spirit, that after the death of the holy prelate he published to the world that beautiful work, entitled, *The Spirit of the Blessed Francis of Sales*. In this performance, he collects even his most ordinary thoughts and those actions which appear extremely common; because, says he, this great man said and did nothing, which was not stamped with his own character of great-

ness, and the purity of the motives, which animated his actions, gave a value to the most insignificant incidents.

This was the same Bishop of Belley, who afterwards made to Cardinal Richelieu that beautiful answer, which displays such sincere piety and such presence of mind. The Cardinal always shewed a peculiar predilection for men of merit; ingenuity, piety, learning, infallibly gained his favour; and whether he loved in others the qualities which he possessed himself, or whether he consulted his own reputation, there were few men in the enjoyment of public esteem, who did not partake of his favours. Though the Bishop of Belley constantly resided in his diocese, his reputation was too high not to reach the Cardinal; his Eminence wrote to him, and desired him to repair to court, on business which he wished to communicate to him. He obeyed the summons, and the Cardinal told him that being informed of the scantiness of his episcopal revenue, which was scarcely sufficient for his subsistence, he had summoned him to bestow upon him a rich Abbey, of which he was convinced he would make the best use. "The best use I can make of it," replied the Bishop of Belley, "is to thank your Eminence and not to accept it; my Bishopric is assuredly

poor, but it gives me a subsistence, and I am convinced that it is not lawful to possess a plurality of benefices, when one is sufficient for a maintenance." The Cardinal was struck with this disinterested answer, though as he was in possession of several benefices, his conduct could not be complimented; but he could not help saying: "My Lord Bishop of Belley, If I were Pope I would canonise you." "My Lord," replied the Bishop in a modest tone, "in that event we should both attain our wishes." A witty and ingenuous answer, worthy of a disciple of the great Francis of Sales; for however we may value ourselves on the contempt of riches, it is rare that they are really despised.

When the Bishop of Belley requested Francis to perform the ceremony of his consecration, he was not in the enjoyment of that high reputation, which he afterwards attained; but he was a man sufficiently considered, to induce the holy prelate to deem it an honour and a pleasure to consecrate a person of his merit. Francis answered his request to this effect, and repaired to Belley on the appointed day, where the august ceremony was performed with more piety than pomp. Scarcely had Francis returned to Annecy, when the Bishop of Belley arrived thither to thank him, and to

complete that holy friendship, which was terminated only with their lives, or rather, which unites them indissolubly in heaven. They had together many conferences; the reader will not be displeased with a connected account of some of them, though they took place at different periods. They visited each other annually; that time they employed as a recreation after their episcopal labours, or rather to animate each other to resume them with redoubled zeal.

* During the first visit, which the Bishop of Belley paid to the holy prelate, he began a gentle reproof by saying, that as a friend he believed himself bound to admonish him of a considerable fault he had committed, to which perhaps his attention was never directed. Francis replied, that he would do him a favour to acquaint him with it, and to adopt the same conduct, whenever he should observe him guilty of any error. "The fault to which I allude," replied the Bishop of Belley, "is that which you have committed by consecrating me; it is true, I am not less culpable by giving my consent; but my faults will not justify yours." "There is something worse which you do not explain," replied Francis; "and that

* Anon. Book II.

is, I apprehend that I shall not receive pardon for my sin, for I cannot persuade myself to repent of it; at all events, it belongs to you to remove this pretended charge, by continuing to live as you have begun in a manner so conformable to our obligations." These words induced Francis to speak of the duties of Bishops; but as this is not the place to record all that passed, the reader will find the substance of the conversation in the eighth book of this history.

Another day the Bishop of Belley, who was a great admirer of Seneca the philosopher, after bestowing on that writer great commendations, observed that he gave great elevation to the mind and heart, that he inspired a contempt for pleasure and for pain, the ordinary sources of the greatest temptations; finally that he had seen nothing in the ancients more conformable to the Gospel than his sentiments. Francis replied, that if they be interpreted literally, some connection will be found to exist, but that an attentive perusal of his writings will shew that nothing can be more remote from the evangelical spirit; that the Gospel perpetually breathes humility, distrust of our own strength, contempt of ourselves; that Seneca on the contrary places continually before our eyes the consideration of our pretended ex-

cellence; that agreeably to the principles of his sect, the most haughty of the ancient world, he always flatters the natural vanity of man, by the great opinion which he instils of ourselves and of our own strength; that for this reason he wishes his wise man to seek and find true happiness in himself alone; that he raises him above all sublunary objects, and makes him the lord of the universe. "Dangerous maxims," continued Francis, "and as remote from the Gospel as the heavens are from the earth:" but reason, I mean unadulterated reason, which is not caught by pompous expressions, finds little to approve; for the wise man of Seneca is but a phantom, an effect of the imagination, which exhibits no reality. For every other philosopher has made this notion a subject of ridicule; and after all that can be said, a slight examination will discover, that human nature can never reach that sublime height.

The Bishop of Belley acknowledged, that the stoics can never be exculpated from the charge of pride, which is by no means compatible with the weakness and misery of man; but he added, that when this pride is removed, their sentiments are calculated to inspire constancy and firmness amidst the strokes of fortune; that they instil a contempt for the world, and prepare us to form happiness

in our own breasts by the practice of Christian virtues. "Then," continued he, "the wise man of Seneca may be converted into a true Christian, who, instead of ascribing his excellence to himself, will be persuaded, that of himself he can do nothing, that all comes from God, that in Him all our hopes and expectations are centered, and that to Him all glory is to be given." Francis acknowledged that all this might be done; but he added, that the road was long and circuitous, and that in it many had lost their way. "Believe me," he farther said, "self-love needs not to be flattered; it is already but too strong, its seductive allurements carry us on almost against our will; and what have we not to apprehend, when by an agreement with enemies, who bear the deceitful appearance of friends, we add to its strength, and contribute to our own destruction. Happy is the man, who distrustful of his inborn pride, that fatal enemy of virtue, from whose snares no one is exempt, who, incessantly engaged in combating this foe, is always on his guard against every object, that can give him support or increase his strength." The Bishop of Belley from that moment laid aside the prepossession which he had formed in favour of Seneca, and agreed with Francis, that humility is so essen-

tial to true virtue, that no solid building can be raised but on this foundation.

They had besides a conversation on the most useful method of preaching the Gospel; but the length of it renders the particulars too extensive to be inserted in this place. It will be sufficient to relate, that they agreed in banishing all complimentary addresses from the pulpit, and in establishing this maxim, that the chair of truth was not designed to applaud men and to flatter their vanity. However in opposition to this maxim, the Bishop of Belley, who was soon after desired to preach to the first convent of the visitation of Annecy, could not refrain from bestowing great commendations on the holy daughters, who had founded it, and whose virtue, gave general edification. Flattery had no share in the address; the Bishop delivered the sentiments of his heart; perhaps he intended to honour Francis, who had formed the institute, followed by these virtuous ladies. The sermon gave great satisfaction, and the preacher was highly applauded. The Bishop of Belley expected, that Francis would give his opinion concerning it; in this however he was disappointed, and he ventured himself to start the subject. Francis observed to him, that the audience appeared perfectly satisfied, with the excep-

tion of one man. The Bishop was at first not aware, who that person could be, and desired the holy prelate to name him. Francis replied, that it was himself; that he must well remember they had both agreed, that the praises of men were not to be blended with the word of God; that such a practice generally produced very bad effects; that it was calculated rather to destroy, than to support virtue; that the important advice of the holy Scripture should ever be followed: *Praise no person during his life.* The meaning of this, added he, is, delay your praise of any one till his death, when flattery cannot be suspected, and when the person commended is no longer exposed to the subtle poison, which ever proves the food of pride and ambition.

The Bishop of Belley availed himself of this remonstrance, and made a secret resolution, if ever he should again be asked to preach, to give his friend perfect satisfaction. An opportunity occurred eight days after; the Nuns of St. Clare asked for a sermon, and the Bishop was invited to preach. Every one expected to hear a flowery oration, like the former discourse; but he exposed in such forcible strains the severity of the Gospel, and the necessity of following it in practice, he impressed in such a lively manner the terror of

the Divine judgments, and he painted the rigours of His justice in such glowing colours, that his hearers retired in alarm, unable to utter a word. The holy prelate visited him after his sermon, and the Bishop of Belley asked him, if the only man, who had not been pleased with his former sermon, was satisfied with this. Francis replied with a smile, that this man was extremely satisfied, and that he conjured him to preach always with the same solidity. "For," added he, "where are men to learn those truths, which it is of so much consequence for them to know, if they be not published from the pulpit?"

* The Abbey of Ripaille having been some time vacant, the Duke of Savoy offered it to the holy prelate; but as he deemed it unlawful to possess a plurality of benefices, he thanked his Highness for the kind offer, and begged him to establish in it a monastery of Carthusians. The Duke consented to the proposal; and the holy prelate had the satisfaction of having drawn those holy solitaries into his diocess. One day as the weather was extremely inviting, Francis proposed to the Bishop of Belley a visit to his new guests. As they were returning from this pious excursion,

* Anon. Book II. Aug. of Sales. Book VI.

they stopped at a small village to visit the church, and to perform their devotions. The report of their arrival was now spread; and Francis was sent for by an inhabitant of the village, who was very ill, with a request that he would hear his confession. The holy prelate repaired immediately to the place. The sick man made his confession with great sentiments of piety. After receiving absolution, he asked Francis, if he thought his illness would terminate fatally. Francis supposing that he was afraid of death, and not willing to increase his alarms, replied, that more serious disorders were sometimes removed; that he had to place all his confidence in God, and to submit to his holy will. But he was soon surprised to find, that the sick man was distressed at his answer; that he remained some time without uttering a word, and then declared, that so far from fearing death, he was afraid his death might be delayed. Francis imagined that his penitent might have some secret grounds of uneasiness, which gave him a disgust for life; he begged him therefore to open his mind, and he was preparing to administer consolation. But his astonishment was increased, when the sick man informed him, that he had no grounds whatever of uneasiness; that God had blessed him with more property than was necessary for his comfort; that he had a wife

and children by whom he was beloved, and with whose conduct he had every reason to be satisfied. "But my Lord," added he with a sigh, "all these comforts have never prevented me from experiencing the bitterness of the world. We are here exposed to such complicated evils, true blessings are so rare, we are so little adapted to this fleeting existence, that if God had not commanded us to remain, till He should summon us to depart, long ago, I should have been no more." He then expatiated so forcibly on the happiness prepared by God for those who love Him, he expressed in such glowing language the holy impatience, which he felt to possess the only good, which could satisfy the desires of his heart, that even Francis of Sales himself was overpowered with these sentiments, and incapable of uttering a word. In the midst of this conversation, the sick man lost his sight and his speech; the extreme-unction was administered, and he expired with the same tranquillity, which had distinguished his life.

Francis then went to join the company of the Bishop of Belley, and related all that had happened; he added that the Holy Ghost was a Great Master, who formed at the same time the mind and the heart; that slender talents, want of

instruction and education, were no obstacles to the infusion of His graces, and that when it pleased Him to instruct without any external aid, the most simple souls, He imparted more light than the most elevated minds could acquire with all their speculations. They then conversed on the death so precious in the sight of God of this good man, on the impression of Divine grace on the heart, and on the almost necessary connection of a good life and a holy death. They then turned their reflections to the state in which death places those who are called persons of the world; they remarked how at that last moment, in which time ends and eternity begins, pleasure, glory, distinction and fortune, are brought to a period; how every thing disappears, vanishes like a phantom before their eyes, and that in proportion as death approaches, they feel an increase of trouble, fear and apprehension, by the frightful remembrance of their crimes, and the dreadful image of eternity and the Divine justice. "Such is the situation," exclaimed the holy prelate, "to which those who have forgotten God during life, are infallibly reduced at their death; the greatest Princes, the conquerors and masters of the world, at length reach this fatal moment; and the only advantage which they reap is, that they are praised where they are not, while they are tormented where they

are; or rather they are held up to distant ages like fine statues at the end of a view, and insensible to the commendations which are bestowed on them, contribute only to the amusement of the beholder."

This conversation employed them till their arrival at Annecy. The following day the holy prelate was willing to entertain his guest with the innocent pleasure of an aquatic excursion on the lake; as they were engaged in conversation, the master of the vessel having some occasion to speak to Francis, addressed him by the title of father; the Bishop of Belley in a low tone suggested that a Bishop was to be addressed by the title of Lordship. "No! No!" said immediately the holy prelate, "call me father; that quality suits me better than the other." Then turning to the Bishop of Belley, he whispered to him: "The Kings of nations exercise dominion, but with you it shall not be so." The neighbourhood of the dioceses of these two great Bishops afforded them frequent opportunities of visiting each other, and of conversing together. But their friendship was not confined to these occurrences; every thing was common between them; the interests of one were those of the other; and this evidently appeared from the conduct of the Bishop of Belley, when

about this time he assisted at the States of France, and spoke with the same zeal in favour of the diocess of Geneva, as he would have exerted in behalf of his own. For though the residence of the Bishop of Geneva, and a great portion of his diocess belong to Savoy, a considerable part still remains in the French territories; which renders the Bishop in many particulars dependant both on the King and the Duke.

The Bishop of Belley was scarcely returned to his diocess, when Francis received an order from the King to repair to Gex, where the Baron of Luz was awaiting- his arrival on important business relating to the Catholic religion. He allowed himself time only to select twelve persons to accompany him, and then undertook the journey. There were two ways by which the bailiwick of Gex could be entered; it was necessary either to pass the bridge of Geneva, or to cross the Rhone. Inconveniences were nearly balanced. That river was so extremely rapid, and had so much overflowed its banks, that to attempt the passage became imminently hazardous. It was not less dangerous to go through Geneva; the holy prelate was there well known; and his zeal for the Catholic religion had excited the hatred of the ministers and of the people. An engagement to

meet the Baron of Luz could not but raise suspicion; the least evil that could happen was that of a legal arrest; the violence of the party might lead to assassination. For to what lengths may not blind zeal be carried; particularly in a popular state, in which every one bears a share in the government, and believes himself entitled to interfere in public concerns. This attempt was more to be dreaded, as his death could be avenged only by the Duke of Savoy; and there was reason to believe, as it will soon appear, that it was easy to give a suspicious appearance to this journey, and to persuade that Sovereign, that religion was a mere pretext, and that Francis had been gained by His Christian Majesty, for the purpose of treating with the Baron of Luz concerning the Sovereignty of Geneva.

All these dangers were easily foreseen without much sagacity; fear which magnifies the most distant appearances of danger, did not permit the timid to conceal the hazards to be encountered by passing through Geneva. Accordingly no sooner had the holy prelate testified his design of attempting the only practicable plan, than all his attendants opposed it, and advised him to return, and wait till the Rhone could be crossed without danger. The zeal of Francis did not permit him

to adopt this timid advice; the Faith in danger, religion in a forlorn state, the opportunity of flying to its aid, which occasion if lost, would perhaps never return, appeared to him such powerful motives to stimulate a Bishop, who is obliged to expose even life itself for his flock, that he determined to encounter the difficulties. But before he embarked in the execution of his design, he had recourse to prayer; he consulted God, for whose glory he was about to expose himself to such apparent dangers; he asked Him to give him strength, to be his guide, and to inspire his attendants, whose assistance was necessary, with the same ardour, with which He had filled his heart.

The miraculous operations, which are performed on the body, usually attract exclusive attention; but those which affect the heart are not less deserving of regard, and not less striking demonstrations of the Divine power. Francis felt a convincing proof of this truth on the present occasion. No sooner had he finished his prayer, than he found his attendants completely changed; they were no longer those timid men, to whose frightened imaginations fear enlarged every object; they offered to follow him, wherever he should think proper to lead the way; and availing himself of

their good dispositions, he took the road of Geneva. He arrived at the gate, when it was going to be shut, and the bridge to be drawn up, as it was the hour of service. The commanding officer of the guard asked his name, that it might be enregistered; Francis who was at the head of his attendants, replied that he was the *Bishop of the diocess*. The officer without reflecting on the answer, suffered him to pass with all his attendants. In that manner he crossed the whole city of Geneva; but having reached the other extremity, where the gate of Gex was situated, he found it shut agreeably to the usual custom, as the service was begun. On this he entered an inn, till the gate should be opened. The confidence which he had in God supported him; he felt no interior trouble, but exhibited his usual tranquillity. This was not the situation of his attendants; they had no sooner reflected, that they were shut up in Geneva, and that on being recognised, they might immediately be arrested, than their fortitude deserted them. Indeed the danger was sufficient to justify their fears. Two hours passed in this perplexity, and the gate was at length opened. Francis having again mounted his horse, left Geneva without any obstacle, and arrived at Gex, before his attendants were sufficiently recovered from their alarm. The Baron

of Luz did not learn the danger to which he had been exposed, without great discomposure; he admired his zeal; but he could not refrain from blaming him, and from remarking to him all the circumstances of the danger, which he had avoided. "Your observations," replied the holy prelate, "are not new; I had foreseen all, and I was in the company of persons wiser than myself, whose penetration nothing escaped; but a little confidence in God would surmount greater difficulties."

No small surprise was excited at Geneva, when it was known from the register and the deposition of the landlord that Francis had been there, and that he had been shut up for two hours. *The Bishop of the diocese* was not a problem for every one, as it had proved to be to the officer who commanded at the gate. His boldness was admired; and to perpetuate the remembrance of it, these words were inserted in the register; *let him return*; but it was not an experiment to be made twice. God gave a blessing to the zeal of the holy Bishop by the success which he met with in the bailiwick of Gex; he there offered to meet the ministers of Geneva in a conference; he had one with those of the country, whom he succeeded in convincing. He made a considerable

number of conversions, and restored to the Catholics eight parish churches, of which the Calvinists had taken possession. After this success, when the Rhone became passable, he crossed it, and returned to Annecy.

But he was no sooner arrived, than he was informed, that his journey had been represented in a suspicious light to the Duke of Savoy, and that this Prince had testified great resentment towards him and the whole house of Sales. That Sovereign could never divest himself of preconceived suspicions, which the slightest appearance was sufficient to awaken; and as age had now increased the natural distrust of his temper, he could never remove from his jealous mind his apprehensions, that the esteem in which Francis was held in France, and the advantageous offers which were perpetually made to draw him thither, might terminate in a treaty; that would surrender his rights to the Sovereignty of Geneva.* Francis spared no pains to remove these suspicions; he wrote to him in a style at once energetic and respectful, and proceeded so far as to offer to visit him, and to remain in safe custody, till he should be completely convinced of the falsehood of

* Aug. of Sales. Book VI. Anon. Book II.

the allegations, which had been made. The Duke with all his distrust was disarmed by this offer, and resumed for him his usual esteem and benevolence; but charmed as he was with the virtue of the holy prelate, he never laid aside his apprehensions but with his life. There was however an infallible method of removing his disquietude; and this was a cession of the rights of the church of Geneva, which he would have purchased at a great price. But Francis, who possessed firmness as well as mildness of character, would never consent to do that injury to his church. The Duke, who was unable to conceive the motives that could induce him to prefer an uncertain and distant good, to a present advantage which it depended only on himself to enjoy, ascribed his conduct to his predilection for France. Francis never opened his mind on this important point; but it is apparent, that as he had good reasons for not treating with His Christian Majesty on his claims to Geneva, he was equally unwilling to come to a compromise with a Prince, who might have availed himself of it to the disadvantage of France. However that may be, Francis being requested some time after by the canons of Lyons to preach the lent in their church of St. Cross, thought it prudent to decline the invitation, in order not to renew the suspicions of a Prince, but

too susceptible of such impressions, and whom he had every possible reason to treat with caution.

* The holy prelate at this time, (1610) suffered the most affecting loss which he could experience, by the death of his mother the Countess of Sales. The care, the tenderness and the piety with which she brought him up, have been related. He was the first fruit, with which God had blessed the marriage of his parents; and he likewise held the most distinguished place in the heart of his tender mother. She had great affection for all her children; never did a better mother exist, but she felt a tender regard for Francis above the rest, though they all possessed the greatest merit.¹ With these sentiments Francis corresponded by a love, ardent, tender and respectful; and it may be asserted, that after God, she was the dearest object of his affections. A good death is invariably the fruit of a holy life; and God never abandons those in their last moments, who have been faithful in His service. This virtuous widow had a preconception of her approaching end; and to prepare herself for it, she retired to Annecy to make a retreat under the direction of her dear son. Scarce was she returned to Thorens, when

* Aug. of Sales. Book VI. Anon. Book II.

she was seized with an apoplexy from which she never recovered. Francis hearing of her illness hastened to her assistance; but all his attention proved unavailing. She was fruit ripe for heaven; and God had fixed the time to call her to Himself, and to confer on her the crown of justice, which He has promised to those, who shall be faithful to Him, and who preferring Him before all things, shall have lived for Him alone. Francis performed for her the last duties, with a firmness which excited general admiration. He loved her with all the tenderness of which he was susceptible; but his submission to the orders of God counteracted the feelings of nature. "She belonged to God," says he, "more than to me; He has resumed His own; and I cannot but thank Him for having given me so virtuous a mother, and for having suffered me to enjoy her for so long a time."

He was informed at the same time, (1610) of the death of Henry IV. which took place at Paris on the fourteenth of May, in the tragical manner known to the whole world. That Monarch honoured Francis with his esteem, and even with his friendship; his benefactions were obstructed only by the disinterestedness of the prelate, and it may be asserted, that he would have secured at

any price, the advantage of such a man to France, if God had not fixed him in Savoy, or if Francis, less faithful to his vocation, had yielded to views of interest. He deplored this great King in a manner which he merited; he commended him in conversation and in his writings; one of his letters to Deshayes discovers the extent of his esteem and admiration for Henry the Great.* "Europe," says he, "could not behold a more fatal spectacle than the death of Henry the Great. Who would not feel with us the inconstancy and vanity of human grandeur? This Prince so distinguished by valour, by his victories, by his triumphs, so supremely happy, and in every sense so great, that grandeur appeared to be connected with his life, might have been expected to terminate his last moments by a glorious death; a life so splendid should have been decorated with the spoils of the Levant, after the destruction of Mahometanism."

But as the Saints in noticing the events of the world, never make any reflections which terminate with worldly views, as they always look to the invisible and all powerful hand of God, which conducts events to His ends, and as at the moment

* Letters, Book I. Letter 7th.

when He afflicts us, they listen to the instructions which He imparts ; Francis after deploring the loss of this incomparable Prince, exclaims in the following pathetic manner: " Children of men how long will your hearts be hardened? Why do you love vanity, and seek for falsehood. All the grandeur which we behold is but a shadow and illusion. Good God! Why do we not become wiser by so much experience? Why do we not despise this world, which is in reality but an object of contempt?" Every one feels that the heart speaks in this passage; every thing is moving, every thing is animated; but he does not confine himself to these reflections; after these Christian observations, he resumes the praises of this great King: " The greatest happiness of this Prince," says he, " was that by which he became a child of the Church, and the father of France. When he was associated to the flock of the Great Pastor, he became the pastor of his people; and by his conversion to God, he won the hearts of all good Catholics. This is the only happy occurrence which makes me hope, that in his last hour, the mercy of God may have inspired his royal heart with the contrition necessary to a Christian. I therefore pray to the Divine bounty, that it would shew mercy to him, who has imparted it to thousands; that it would pardon him,

who has pardoned so many vanquished enemies, and that it would admit to glory this soul that had been reconciled to the Church, and which after that event admitted so many to favour."

He speaks afterwards in the liveliest strains of gratitude, of the kindness with which this Prince had honoured him; and he says in express terms, that in the year one thousand six hundred and two, he had made to him offers, which would have tempted not only a poor priest like himself, but even a prelate. It is thus that Princes, who have been truly great during life, extend their reputation beyond the grave; posterity never fails to confirm the august titles to which the admiration of their virtues has given birth. Henry was great during his life; he is still considered in the same view since his death; and France which deplored his loss, sheds at the present period, a tear over his tomb. But if he ever was honoured with any applause of an unsuspicious nature, it is that bestowed by the holy prelate; who loved truth too much to betray it, and whose heart, disengaged from interested views, the usual source of undeserved praise, would never have lavished on Henry, though a King, any commendation to which he was not entitled. The year which deprived France of so great a Prince, gave to the

Church the holy and celebrated Order of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin, the distinguished fruit of the wisdom, the piety and charity of the holy prelate, who founded it at this time.* But as it is not the intention of the writer of this history to interrupt the course of his narrative, whatever relates to the rise and progress of this holy institute is postponed to the following book.

About this time Antony Favre, the intimate friend of Francis, who has been mentioned, and who resided at Annecy in quality of President of Genevois, was appointed by the Duke of Savoy first President of Chamberry. Having no more need of the large and beautiful mansion, which he possessed in that city, he made a present of it to the holy prelate, who as well as his predecessors, had till that time inhabited a rented house. This present was a melancholy consolation for the absence of such a friend; but he could not behold a man of his distinguished merit and probity presiding over the justice of his country, without the most exquisite gratification. Though this house of the President contained galleries, saloons and very commodious apartments, he reserved for his own use a cabinet only, which was so low and so

* The day, of the foundation was June 6, 1610.

narrow, that it had the appearance of a tomb, rather than of a chamber. This was the motive of his choice; the walls were naked and unadorned with paintings and tapestry both in winter and summer; a small bed, a chair, a table with a crucifix upon it constituted his furniture. There retired from the world, more in mind than in body he reflected often on that critical hour, which reduces all mankind to a level; he considered himself as a culprit condemned to death, whose sentence is pronounced, and who waits only for the moment of execution. However innocently his life was spent, he deemed it full of defects; he reviewed in the bitterness of his soul the years which had flown away, the time that was no more, and of which he believed that he had not made a holy use. Impressed with the infinite sanctity of God, before whom the angels are not pure, and who is to judge us according to our justice, he would exclaim: "If thou shalt examine our iniquities, O Lord, if thou shalt weigh them in the balance of thy justice, who shall dare to appear before thee, who shall support thy presence."

He reproached himself with not having followed the inspirations of God, who suggested to him to decline the episcopal dignity. "What were my

thoughts," did he say, "to burden myself with the care of so many souls? Had I not enough, even too much to do to save my own?" It may be recollected, what efforts he made to avoid this dignity; what fears, what apprehensions, what humble sentiments he entertained, believing himself unworthy of the charge. Any other but himself would have discovered no ground of self-condemnation; and certainly the manner, in which he had sustained this great dignity, would have justified him in any other eyes than his own. However he never could pardon in himself what he called excessive facility: soon after he departed for Turin and for Milan.

Many reasons induced him to undertake this journey; he had much business to transact in favour of the new Order of the Visitation. For as in new establishments are found difficulties, which were not foreseen, and obstacles which are not easily surmounted without the aid of Sovereign authority, he deemed it a duty to provide for his rising institute this protection, of which it might stand in need at subsequent periods. Another reason had great weight in forwarding the journey; for he had to leave his diocess, a circumstance, which never took place without weighty reasons. For a length of time he beheld with

deep concern the bad administration of the College of Annecy; a deficiency of talent in the superiors, and a still greater want of virtue and good example, occasioned a bad education of youth, and obliged parents to provide for the care of their children in other places. This necessarily became a heavy charge even to those whose circumstances were easy; as to others they were obliged to rest satisfied with what Annecy could supply.

Francis who was convinced, that good morals usually depend on the good education of youth, omitted no pains to introduce order into that establishment. With this view he had made an offer of the College to the Jesuits; but as those Fathers were engaged in forming at that time many establishments in various quarters, they were under the necessity of declining the offer. Francis therefore determined to apply to the Barnabites, and for that purpose to proceed to Milan, in order to treat with the superiors. Devotion likewise was blended with this motive; he had a profound veneration for St. Charles, Archbishop of Milan, who had died some years before in the odour of sanctity. Cardinal Frederic Borromeo, his cousin and successor, was walking in his steps, and was considered one of the most distinguished prelates of Italy. Him Francis wished to consult on a plan

which he had devised, to take his brother for his coadjutor; for whatever might be his brother's merits, he was afraid of yielding in such concerns, to the impressions of nature and to human considerations. He was well aware that the heart deludes the mind, that it deceives the understanding and forces its consent; and that we but too frequently seek ourselves in those matters, in which we at first believed self-love to possess the smallest share. The business was no other than the choice of a successor, doubtless the most important concern in which he could embark, and in which deception would be attended with dangerous consequences. For this reason he wished to recommend the affair to the prayers of St. Charles, and with that view to perform his devotions at his tomb.

A charitable reason supported the motives which have been assigned. The Secretary of the Duke of Nemours had been, a short time before, assassinated in the woods near Annecy; many gentlemen perfectly innocent of the crime had been charged with this atrocious deed; they were prosecuted with excessive severity, and even in the event of their exculpation, the legal procedures were likely to terminate in their ruin. A heart less susceptible of compassion than that

of Francis, would have felt for the affliction of so many families: as he was convinced of the innocence of the parties accused, he collected proofs of that circumstance, of which he was determined to be the bearer in order to display them in their full force before the Duke of Savoy. This motive sufficiently weighty of its own nature, when joined to so many others, removed all difficulty with respect to absence from his diocess. Accordingly after the holidays of Easter, he departed for Turin; the Duke received him with his usual kindness, and with that distinction, to which his character and his virtue were entitled. He spoke to his Highness in favour of those who were accused of the assassination of the Secretary of the Duke of Nemours; but the prepossessions against them were so strong, that the proofs of their justification adduced by Francis were found necessary; and even these documents required the support of all his zeal. He became their solicitor and their advocate; he acted and spoke for them, and succeeded in obtaining their liberty, with a prohibition to carry the proceedings to any greater lengths. He then treated with the Duke concerning the establishment of the Barnabites at Annecy: His Highness approved the plan, promised the letters patent necessary for the purpose, and consented that he should proceed to Milan to

transact this business. As to his project of establishing the new Order of the Visitation, the institute was favoured with such a general approbation, that he had no difficulty in obtaining all that he had to ask in its favour; the Duke and the Duchess assured him of their protection, which enabled him to surmount many obstacles. He departed for Milan, as soon as he had terminated his business at court.

* He was there received with great honours by the Governor of Milan, and Cardinal Borromeo, the Archbishop. The day after his arrival, he celebrated mass on the tomb of St. Charles, and there spent many hours in prayer. He afterwards paid a visit to the Archbishop, and had with him a long conference on many concerns relating to his diocess: he then treated with the superiors of the Barnabites concerning their establishment at Annecy, concluded the business, and carried it into execution on his return. The festival of the holy winding sheet now called him to Turin, and he departed from Milan with the same honours, which had been shewn to him on his arrival. The Duke had named him one of the prelates, who were to expose the holy winding sheet to the

* Aug. of Sales. Book VI.

· veneration of the people; he performed the ceremony with all that devotion, which marks so striking of the love of a God, were calculated to excite in his heart. The day after this festival, he had a private audience with the Duke, who conversed with him a considerable time on the ultramontane affairs, and on the progress of the Catholic religion in his diocess. This Prince interested himself much in the business; and indeed every Sovereign, who understands his own advantage, can entertain no other sentiments. The union of the Prince and the people cannot be too close; whatever tends to dissolve it is seldom overlooked without danger; however nothing contributes more strongly to produce that effect, than a diversity in religious opinions. When the bonds, which unite man with God, are once broken, those which connect men together, will not subsist long. On this occasion the Duchess of Savoy proposed to the Duke to give to the holy prelate, John Francis of Sales, his brother, as his coadjutor; and God permitted that she should make the request at a time, when every thing concurred to ensure success to the petition. The death of Henry the Great had removed the distrust of the Duke concerning the cession of the Sovereignty of Geneva; and as the unpleasant situation of the court of France had allayed his

uneasiness from that quarter, he intended to employ Francis to negotiate the marriage of the Prince of Piedmont with Christina of France, the daughter of Henry IV. Such a business would demand from the holy prelate a long absence from his diocese; and the Duke foresaw that he would never consent to such a step, unless he could obtain a proper person to perform his functions. The request for a coadjutor seasonably removed this difficulty; and this was a leading motive, which induced His Highness to give his consent. Francis did not interfere in the nomination; the Duchess of Savoy, desirous that her first Almoner should be a Bishop, solicited in his favour, and obtained the coadjutorship of Geneva. Francis having concluded his business at Turin, returned to Annecy, where shortly after he established the Barnabites.

* He wrote at this time his *Theotime*, or *The Treatise of the Love of God*; a work, which could not be produced but by a mind as enlightened, and a heart as full of charity as his own. He shews in this excellent performance the natural inclination, which all mankind have to know and love God; the preventing graces with which

* Anon. Book II.

He favours them, in order that they may love Him, and the little share of fidelity, with which they generally follow the sweet attraction; he gives an exact picture of the coldness, of the inquietude, and of the inconstancy of the heart in the progress of Divine love; how it relinquishes its object to fasten on creatures; how sensible objects make a forcible impression on it; how they captivate it and bear it away; how every thing should turn it to God, while a contrary effect is but too often produced. He proceeds afterwards to the consideration of prayer, which is one of the principal exercises of Divine love; and after speaking of the contemplation and of the repose of the soul in God, he explains her languishes, her transports, and the pains which God makes her endure to try her fidelity; he then describes the disgusts and interior troubles, which prevent the soul from knowing the ardour, with which she is filled; how she is filled with fear, with alarm and dejection, and in the excess of her grief, she falls into a languor, which resembles the situation of persons at the point of death. Then, adds the holy prelate, the soul is unable to discern whether she can hope or fear; and the trouble with which she is filled, the grief which oppresses her, is of such a complexion, that she has no spirits to look at her interior, in order to

examine what passes ; she is reduced to the painful necessity of believing, that she has neither hope nor love, but slight impressions of those virtues, which she feels in herself, and which she possesses in a sovereign degree. Sentiments so pure could never be described, unless they had been previously felt ; it is a language which can never be learned but by the long experience of a holy life ; and a person must have been for a great length of time under the hand of God, docile, submissive and attentive to His most secret ways, to speak so correctly on this subject. This is all that is proper to be recorded of The Treatise of the Love of God in this place ; the farther consideration of it must be postponed to the eighth book of this history.

While the holy prelate was thus deeply engaged in forming souls to the highest perfection, and in teaching them what he had learned from God himself, the Turks, those formidable enemies of the Christian name, whom we now behold in a state of degradation, were making such a progress in Hungary, as spread a considerable alarm throughout Germany. The Emperor too weak to resist their attempts, had convoked a diet at Ratisbon, on the first day of February, in the year one thousand six hundred and fifteen, to solicit succour

from the Princes of the empire. As the revolt of Geneva from the Bishop did not prevent his Imperial Majesty from acknowledging the prelate as a Prince of the empire, and the legitimate Sovereign of that rebellious city, he wrote to Francis, and invited him to repair to the diet by letters dated from Lintz the eighteenth day of March, in the year one thousand six hundred and fourteen. Agreeably to the ancient usage, the courier of the Emperor repairs to Geneva; and presenting himself before the episcopal palace, desires to speak to the Bishop in the name of His Imperial Majesty; he is told, that the Bishop is not there, but that he resides at Annecy. The courier records this answer, and mounting again on horseback, proceeds to Annecy to deliver the letters of the Emperor. This ceremony, which at present seems to answer but little purpose, is however a proof of the Sovereignty of the Bishop, which is from time to time renewed in such a manner as to preserve the remembrance of it; and it clearly demonstrates that neither the Emperor nor the empire can be disposed to approve the revolt of Geneva from the Bishop, and that he is not less considered as one of the leading members of the diet. Francis replied to the Emperor, that he felt considerable pain from his inability to comply with the orders of His Imperial Majesty, and to

support him with his fortune and his advice, on an occasion which so deeply interested the cause of God and the glory of the Christian name; that the inhabitants of Geneva by their revolt had unjustly seized the greatest part of his revenues, had scarcely left him a subsistence, and had completely disabled him from shewing to His Majesty and to the empire, the obedience and the support, which all its members owe to their august chief; that under these circumstances, he would not cease to entreat the Most High, the all-powerful God of armies, to bless his arms and his designs, to go before him, to be his guide, and to give him the victory over the enemies of His name. This was all the holy prelate was enabled to perform in the situation of his affairs, and the Emperor and the empire had formed no farther expectations.

God at this time permitted that the reputation of Franeis should be attacked in a manner so horrid and so marked with artifice, that the most enlightened persons, and those least subject to deception, almost lost the high esteem in which they held his character. A courtezán who was young and handsome, after committing numberless disorders at Chamberry, was induced by the offers of a gentleman in the family of the Duke of Nemours to fix her abode at Annecy; her admirer

was a personal enemy of the house of Sales, and in particular was hostile to the holy prelate. She had not been long there, before she repeated the same disorders which she had occasioned at Chamberry; and her debaucheries were so notorious, that they could not escape observation. Francis on this occasion displayed his usual prudence; he employed friends to give her secret advice, and even to resort to menaces; but the protection of the Duke of Nemours, which her admirer boasted, inflamed her insolence, and engaged her to set at defiance his counsels and his threats. Francis, thus constrained to adopt stronger measures, ascended the pulpit, and preached against her with so much force, that many of her followers receded, and refused to see her again. Nothing more was wanting to inflame the resentment of this woman to the highest degree of fury; this was expected by her admirer; he had not a little contributed to rouse that spirit of vengeance, of which such characters are susceptible, when they are crossed in their nefarious projects. He possessed a dangerous talent; he was able to counterfeit every kind of writing, and his success in this fatal art was such as to deceive the most skilful observers. He found means of procuring some letters written by the holy prelate, and in concert with the courtesan, he forged one

as written to her by Francis. In this letter the holy Bishop was represented as making an earnest apology for having been obliged to preach against her; and speaking in the character of a villain, he was introduced as complaining of the necessity, under which persons of his character so frequently laboured of imposing on the people, and of disguising their true sentiments; he was afterwards made to say to this unfortunate woman a thousand criminal things, and to propose a meeting on the following night in a secret place, where he might be at liberty in her company. It is clear, that the more criminal was the style of this letter, the less suspicion could fall on the holy prelate; but the hand-writing and the style bore such a resemblance to his, that he himself was deceived, when he saw the performance. When this work of darkness had been thus planned and executed, the gentleman carried the letter sealed to the courtesan, read it to her, and again brought it back, after agreeing with her, that she should declare that he had taken it away, and that she should testify great indignation at his boldness.

When these measures had been taken, the courtesan in concert with the gentleman, raised a clamour in consequence of an important letter

which he had taken from her; made complaints to all her friends, and in appearance left nothing unattempted to recover it. This circumstance served to render it a matter of notoriety; for the gentleman often importuned by the friends of this woman to restore the letter which he had taken, assumed the disguise of confidence; and shewing the forged letter, obliged them to acknowledge, that it was not prudent to give back such a performance into the hands of a person of her character and description. Thus the wretch, who ruined the reputation of a holy Bishop by a fatal artifice, of which he was the author, had the gratification to pass for a discreet man, and to make the world believe, that he spared the honour of the prelate.

It would be difficult to describe the injury, which this unfortunate letter so wickedly contrived did to the holy prelate. The innocent life, which he had so constantly led from his tenderest years, his firmness, his zeal, his piety so generally acknowledged, and that brilliant sanctity, which God had been pleased to honour with miracles, all this could not withstand so dark a calumny, nor support his reputation in the minds of men. Even those who believing themselves better acquainted with him, were less disposed to form an

unfavourable judgment, were filled with uncertainty, perplexity and confusion, and knew not what opinion to entertain. Thus must we acknowledge, that it was the most terrible proof, to which the virtue of this holy servant of God could be exposed; but God was willing to purify more and more that heart already so pure and disengaged, and which perhaps had no other attachment, than that which agreeably to common practice is innocently entertained for character, and without which a ministry so holy as the episcopacy cannot be supported.

In the mean time the calumny, which daily gained credit, at length reached the Duke of Nemours. This Prince, who was a friend of the gentleman that had forged the letter, heard that he had quarrelled with the courtesan; he enquired the reason of it, and this wretched man told him in confidence, what he had imparted to so many others. The Duke, who was perfectly well acquainted with the hand-writing of the holy prelate, desired to see the letter. At the sight of a hand so skilfully copied, and of a style so well imitated, his surprise was not to be exceeded; he examined it with attention; he compared it with other letters which he had in his possession; but these precautions served only to

justify the calumny; and the Duke deceived by appearances, which there seemed not the smallest reason to distrust, could not help exclaiming: "What! the Bishop of Geneva is but a hypocrite, a villain, an impostor! in whom can we after this repose confidence?"

As he was deeply engaged in these thoughts, a gentleman of his household, of the name of Foras, a relation of the holy prelate, and who entertained for him a singular veneration, entered the apartment on some business relating to his charge. The Duke, who had desired to keep the letter till the following day, and who had it then in his possession, took him into his cabinet, and asked him, whom he took the Bishop of Geneva to be? "A Saint," replied Foras; "it is impossible to know him and to form any doubt on the subject?" "There," replied the Duke, "is something, that will undeceive you. Read this letter, and see if there is a greater rogue to be found?" Foras acknowledged, that the hand-writing resembled that of the Bishop of Geneva; but he contended, that he was incapable of writing it, and that there was in the business some secret artifice, which God would finally discover. The Duke laughed at his prepossession, but could not refuse to lend him the letter for the remainder of the day.

The use which he made of it was to carry it immediately to the holy prelate, who was yet unacquainted with the intrigue. He read the whole of the letter without emotion, and without any change of countenance; then returning it to Foras, he said: "Truly the hand-writing resembles mine; but God is my witness, that I never wrote that letter." He then advised him to return it to the Duke of Nemours, as he had it from him; he added, that for his justification he depended on God alone, that He knew the measure of reputation necessary for His service, and that he wished to enjoy no more.

But Foras, who was a young nobleman of courage, and naturally of a disposition somewhat violent, could not discover so much patience; he had no doubt that the gentleman, who had given the letter to the Duke, was the real author. With this impression he wrote him a note, in which he appointed an hour and a place, and informed him that he would restore to him the letter with a sword in his hand, and oblige him to avow the most shameful action, that ever was conceived in the mind of a gentleman. The author of the letter accepted the challenge. But as neither of them appeared on the following day at the levée of the Duke, and as the letter had not

been brought back, his Grace immediately suspected the intended duel, and sent to arrest them; Foras had already repaired to the appointed place. When the news of this transaction reached the ear of the holy prelate, he sent to him his brother, the Chevalier de Sales, desiring him to bring back Foras, whatever reasons he might allege to justify his conduct. It was not without extreme difficulty, that the Chevalier could succeed in his commission; but Foras thinking that he could never execute his design in his presence, postponed the affair to another day, and waited on the holy prelate. He no sooner saw Foras, than he spoke to him in the severest terms of reproach; and having drawn from him an acknowledgment of the intended duel, he told him with much warmth, that he had clearly signified to him, that he would have no other protector of his innocence than God alone; that his rashness was great in believing, that his services were necessary to his justification, and that he would never see him again, unless he abandoned his design of vengeance. Foras was constrained to make the promise. But though he was fully aware of the consequences, he never could be prevailed on to restore the letter to the Duke, but tore it in a thousand pieces; the Duke on this excluded him from his house, and deprived him of his employment.

In the mean time Francis was not justified; and this horrid calumny affected the daughters of the Visitation; the utmost freedom was used in thinking and speaking of the Mother de Chantal; the others were not spared; their innocence and their virtue were found an insufficient protection against the envenomed darts of calumny. This was a mode of wounding the holy prelate in a very tender part; the value of honour in the female sex is well known, particularly when they are engaged in a religious state; the slightest appearance, a suspicion, a word may give a stain; nothing is so easily lost as reputation, nothing is repaired with greater difficulty. One circumstance appeared to justify the unfavourable judgments of the world. In the beginning of the institute, the daughters of the Visitation did not observe inclosure; they had the liberty of going abroad, in order to perform works of charity, and they acquitted themselves of their duty in this particular with a degree of edification, which was sufficient to set calumny at defiance. But when the judgments of mankind have once taken an unfavourable bias, they are not to be stopped in their course; calumny is often strengthened by those means, which appear calculated to blast its influence.

Three years elapsed in this manner, without any appearance of Divine interposition in favour

of so many innocent persons, and without any relaxation on the part of Francis, of firmness and of confidence in God. Always tranquil, always distinguished by an equality of temper, happy in the testimony of a good conscience, raised above the judgments of men, he awaited in a profound peace the time marked by Divine Providence to rescue him from injury and outrage. Those who have not experienced, what is called by David, the contradiction of tongues, the trouble and disquietude with which it usually fills even the firmest souls; those who have not been exposed to this dreadful persecution, will form but a faint idea of the virtue of the holy prelate, in suffering for such a length of time, without disquietude, without any attempt to justify himself, and without losing that peace, that incomparable meekness, which alone should have been deemed sufficient to confound his adversaries, and to convince them of his innocence. But at length the justice of God, which however it may appear slow to our froward dispositions, never loses sight either of the innocent or of the guilty, gave such a display of the innocence of His servant, as to carry conviction to the breasts of the most incredulous. The gentleman, the author of the forged letter, was charged with a commission by the Duke of Nemours. Scarcely had he arrived within two days journey of Annecy, than in passing by a hamlet, he was seized with a violent

cholic. The poverty of the place obliged him to repair to the house of the curate. As his disorder increased, the Duke of Nemours was informed of it, who sent with the utmost expedition physicians and surgeons to attend him; but these persons proved so many witnesses of the innocence of the holy prelate, who were brought thither by Providence, to justify him in a manner so notorious and so free from suspicion. The remedies served only to exasperate the complaint; and there soon appeared an evident necessity of informing the patient, that his last hour was approaching, and that he had only to think of rendering an account to God of his life, and of receiving the rights of the Church. In this melancholy situation, he acknowledged the horrible calumny, which he had invented against the holy prelate, confessed it, charged the attendants to bear witness to the truth, and in particular commissioned the physicians and surgeons of the Duke of Nemours, to undeceive him, and to go in his name and make satisfaction to the Bishop of Geneva. It was not difficult to obtain pardon; but Divine justice was not to be so easily appeased; the gentleman expired in the most excruciating pains. A terrible example, which shews, that God does not always wait till a future life, in order to punish such great crimes, as this unfortunate man had committed.

The holy prelate deplored his fate, offered public prayers for him, and testified a great regret, that he had it not in his power, to embrace him. It was thus that God justified the innocent Bishop, and his holy daughters, who shared in his disgrace. Foras recovered his employment, and the Duke of Nemours exhibited such public marks of esteem for the holy prelate, as completely repaired the injury, which his credulous conduct had done to the reputation of so good a man.

About this time, the Duke of Lesdiguieres, governor of Dauphiny, afterwards constable of France, who had hitherto discovered much zeal for Calvinism, had now given some hopes of his return to the Catholic Church; and the parliament of Grenoble considered Francis as the person, the best qualified to contribute to the execution of this great design. Lesdiguieres was a man possessed of great sense, of much solidity of understanding, of a certain share of knowledge, and was considered sincere in his attachment to Calvinism. His valour and great achievements had placed him in the rank of the greatest and most fortunate generals of Europe; and the Calvinists of France considered him as one of their greatest protectors. The considerable advantages, which Henry the Great had been in some measure con-

strained to grant to the Calvinists, by the edict of Nantes, had nearly placed them in the situation of an independent republic, which subsisted in the heart of his kingdom; and as their interests were not in every instance compatible with those of the state, they were careful to court the leaders of their party, and to secure their attachment by considerable pensions, which enabled them to live with splendor, and to enjoy a suitable consideration. Lesdiguières was of this number; and as his conduct required much circumspection, the work of his conversion demanded inviolable secrecy, and was necessarily to be conducted with the greatest prudence. A decent pretext was therefore to be found by the Bishop of Geneva to proceed to Grenoble, and such as might conceal the real object of his journey, and detain him long enough to execute this great design.

* With this view the parliament wrote to him, to request the same favour, which he had granted to that of Dijon, and to come and preach the ensuing lent in the capital of Dauphiny. Francis replied, that as such a request required him to leave the dominions of the Duke of Savoy, he could not do it without the permission of his

* 1617.

Sovereign, and that he had good reasons for not soliciting his consent. On receiving this answer, the parliament deputed two counsellors to wait on the Duke of Savoy to solicit his permission. He complied with their wishes; and Francis, convinced of the advantages which would accrue to the Church from the conversion of Lesdiguières, judged that a sufficient reason to justify his absence from his flock; he wrote to the Pope on the subject, who approved his reasons, and he accordingly prepared for his journey. On the approach of lent the parliament dispatched two counsellors to wait on him and conduct him to Grenoble. Nothing can be added to the great honours, which were shewn to the holy prelate in this town, and to the demonstrations of esteem, which were exhibited; and nothing could exceed the zeal which he displayed in his sermons, and the great example of virtue, with which they were studiously supported. The Catholics and the Calvinists attracted with his reputation, but much more with that splendid sanctity, which beamed on every eye, in spite of his endeavours to conceal it, crowded to his sermons, and never retired without feeling those powerful impressions of grace, which God had in a manner annexed to his discourses. The conversions, which followed, were so numerous, that the ministers were con-

founded, and issued severe prohibitions to assist at his sermons; but these precautions did not prevent one of the most able of their number publicly to renounce his errors.

This conversion raised such a clamour, and roused the zealots of the party so much against him, that the first president thought it necessary to appoint regular attendants on his person. But when the proposal was made to him, he replied, that he had always found sufficient security in placing his confidence solely in God, and that he entreated Him by anticipation, to pardon all those who should be guilty of any outrage towards his person. In the mean time the conversion of the minister excited a commotion, which was extremely displeasing to the feelings of one of his brethren; and whether he believed himself more able, or that in reality he was only more presumptuous, he ventured to propose a public disputation with Francis. Francis accepted the challenge; and the minister faithful to the appointment, began the conference by a torrent of insults, imagining that if he could discompose his adversary, he should more easily succeed in his object. But a man, who possesses self-command, has a great advantage over a person of an opposite description. Francis listened to his insults

without emotion; and as often as the minister proceeded in that strain, he observed a profound silence, and then resumed the subject, which he had been discussing. A Calvinist, who was present, was equally affected with the insolence of the minister and the invincible patience, which the Bishop of Geneva perpetually opposed to his passionate conduct, and could not refrain from observing, that the contest was unequal, since even the silence of Francis carried conviction. His conversion was one of the effects of the conference; and the advantage was so much on the side of Francis, that the minister died soon after of confusion and a broken heart. Some of those who were present at the dispute, ventured to observe to the holy prelate, that they were surprised at his forbearance, amidst all the insults of the minister; that Christian patience had its limits; and that even the fathers of the Church sometimes repelled with great spirit the insolence of the heretics. "It is true," replied the holy prelate, "but my object was not to humble him or to revenge myself, but to gain him and bring him to the faith; and a return of severe language would not have been friendly to this purpose."

Hitherto Lesdiguières had not assisted at the sermons of the holy prelate; as it has been ob-

served, he had to act with the greatest circumspection. But at length the reputation of Francis became so brilliant, that he could no longer resist the attraction, which he felt to hear him. He afterwards attended his sermons with great assiduity; and feeling himself almost overcome, he requested the favour of private conferences. It has already been observed, that the holy prelate conducted those conferences with peculiar ability; indeed he seldom failed to complete on those occasions what he had begun in his public instructions. As to an excellent understanding and considerable practice he joined an admirable share of presence of mind, of evenness of temper equal to any trial, and an insinuating mildness of manners, which no provocation could ruffle, he possessed advantages, of which the influence was not easily to be counteracted. By his insinuating address he completely gained the confidence of Lesdiguieres, who was so satisfied with the first conference, that he requested the favour of conversing often with him. These communications were at first private; but at length Lesdiguieres, who was distinguished by a greatness of soul, thought it dishonourable thus to place himself under restraint, and resort to dissimulation. The conferences then became public; and the Duke freely acknowledged, that he was satisfied with the experiment, and that the man-

ners of the Bishop of Geneva gave him a complete disgust for the conduct of the ministers.

Nothing more was necessary to diffuse an alarm among the party ; the leaders met in consequence, deliberations took place on the measures to be pursued, and a resolution was adopted, that the ministers should proceed in a body, to wait on the Duke, and remonstrate on his conduct. Lesdiguieres received them in his usual manner, with civility mingled with haughtiness. Their harangue was long and proved disgusting ; at length the minister who spoke for his brethren, happened to express himself in a contemptuous strain concerning the Bishop of Geneva. Lesdiguieres could no longer listen with patience, he interrupted the minister and charged him never to forget, at least in his presence, the respect which he owed to a person of his merit and descent, to a Bishop and Prince of the empire as he was ; then turning to the company, he said, that if he had as much right as the Bishop of Geneva to the Sovereignty of that city, he would not like him remain with indifference at Annecy, but he would soon reduce the city to due submission. The ministers were then suffered to depart without the usual attention, and even without notice. They were extremely mortified at this conduct ; and no

doubt was entertained of the design of the Duke to embrace the Catholic religion. But it is a matter of greater difficulty than is usually imagined, to adopt truths contrary to the prejudices of birth and education. Fantoms which have played before the imagination are not so easily forgotten; and nothing requires more the operation of grace, than to purify the eye of the interior man, in order to render him capable of discerning truth, which is the light of the soul. This grace is bestowed only on pure hearts; and Lesdiguieres, whose life was not very regular, did not possess it; the severity of Catholic discipline proved to him a greater annoyance than the sublimity of the tenets. Francis, who felt no other impression than that of charity, who had no other interest but that of Christ, and who was animated with no other desire but that of saving souls, was not disheartened; he awaited with his usual submission to the orders of God, the time which His mercy had appointed for the conversion of this soul, which was to deprive heresy of so great a support. The lent was concluded, and Francis returned to Annecy without any manifestation, on the part of the Duke, of the plan which he intended to pursue.

It was believed; that affairs would remain in that situation, and that the Duke, from a view to

human interest, would not proceed farther, when intelligence was published, that in concert with Francis, he had obtained leave from the Duke of Savoy, that the holy prelate should again preach, the ensuing lent at Grenoble.* It was then not doubted, that the holy prelate would complete the great work. Indeed he was no sooner returned to Grenoble, than his conferences with Lesdiguieres recommenced; but his heart, enveloped in the bands of profane love, was incapable of following the light of his understanding. Francis, who never worked by halves, laboured at once to break his chains and dissipate his errors; and deeming his conversion to the Catholic faith of little consequence, if his life and manners did not correspond with the purity of his belief, he begged incessantly of God to complete His work, by moving his heart as He had enlightened his mind.

Affairs were in this situation, when the Dukes of Savoy and of Mantua, tired with the war which they had carried on for three years, on the subject of Monferrat, to which they both had stated their claim, now determined to adjust their differences, and Lesdiguieres received an order from the court to repair to Turin to assist at the

* 1618.

conferences relative to a peace. This unexpected turn of affairs prevented Francis from completing the work of his conversion. But while Lesdiguieres was at Turin, a circumstance happened, which shewed his dispositions with respect to the Catholic Church. Cardinal Ludovisio, who had assisted at the conferences in the name of the Pope, preparing to return to Rome on the conclusion of the treaty, paid a visit to Lesdiguieres to take leave. At parting Lesdiguieres told him, that he was not such an enemy to the Church of Rome, as not to wish for a Pope of his merit. "And as to me," replied the Cardinal, "I am sufficiently attached to you, to wish to see you a good Catholic." Lesdiguieres replied, that he wished his elevation to the Pontifical chair depended on that circumstance; the affair would soon be accomplished. "Let us not be precipitate," said the Cardinal; "promise me only to become a Catholic, if I am Pope." Lesdiguieres made the promise. An affair thus originating in civility took place; the Cardinal was afterwards Pope with the title of Gregory XV, and Lesdiguieres long convinced of the truth by the efforts of Francis, embraced the Catholic religion. Those, who have asserted that he was influenced in this concern by the constable's sword which was given to him, were not apprised of these

circumstances, and were not aware, that he was a Catholic before he received that honour.

The departure of the Duke of Lesdiguières for Turin, and the close of lent, enabled Francis to visit the great Carthusian monastery, situated at the distance of some leagues from Grenoble. He had been long acquainted with Don Bruno Daffringues, general of the order, who with a very enlightened mind united the most distinguished piety and a simplicity of manners, which belonged to ancient times. He was received by these holy solitaries with all the respect due to his merit and to his dignity. But Francis, who was an enemy to all distinctions, or rather who knew none but what arose from innocence and virtue, was desirous of living with them as one of the brethren. In that favoured spot, enchanted with their solitude, and with that Christian simplicity, which peculiarly marks that house, he conversed with them on the instability of human life, which flows and passes like a torrent, that roars for a moment and then appears no more. He viewed the troubles, the agitations, the different passions, which spring in the human breast; he observed how men do and undo in the same instant, how they seek and avoid the same objects; how hope elevates some, whilst

fear depresses others; how they are hurried away by the seductive allurements of passion, always forming schemes, and always unfortunate in their enterprises; always seduced and deceived without the possibility of redress, and without finding any thing to check the enthusiastic eagerness, with which they run after false goods, which escape their research, and which they never possess without disgust; how subject to decay as they are, and doomed to a short life, they concert vast schemes, the execution of which would demand the lapse of ages; always so occupied with time, without thinking of eternity, which is overtaking them, which surprises them, and in which they are irretrievably lost. He then turned his reflections to the happiness of an innocent soul, undeceived with respect to the objects, by which she is surrounded, always reconciled to herself and to God, always engaged with Him, always tranquil, enduring life with patience, always ready to leave it, and looking upon eternity, which is so terrible to those who have forgotten God, as the term of her labours, the period of her miseries, and the commencement of happiness, which will never end, and which alone can content a heart made for the enjoyment of Him.

These reflections, which engrossed the mind of Francis, engaged him to make the discovery of a secret which he had always concealed with great care, and which he was afterwards studious not to divulge; for these holy solitaries, during his life, possessed almost exclusively his confidence. The secret in question was, that in obtaining a coadjutor, he had designed to vacate his episcopal See, and retire to the solitude which he had chosen, in order to devote the remainder of his days to the care of his own soul. But God otherwise ordained; this world was not for him a place of repose; that he was to find only in heaven. If Francis had followed the inclinations of his heart, he never would have quitted the Carthusian monastery, which would have been the place of his retreat; but the care of his diocess recalled him to Annecy, whither he returned, leaving these holy solitaries charmed with his piety and his meekness, as he had been delighted with their virtue, and with that admirable simplicity, which at this day is almost without example.

Peter Camus, Bishop of Belley, relates on this occasion an instance of this Christian simplicity, which he had learned from Francis, and which he highly valued. He records it in so natural a

manner, that it would injure the anecdote to make any alteration in his mode of giving it.* Francis on his arrival at the great Carthusian monastery, was received by the general of the order, who conducted him to the apartment allotted to persons of his character. After conversing some time on heavenly things, says the Bishop of Belley, they observed that the following day was to be kept with solemnity as a festival of the order; and this circumstance obliged the good man to take leave of Francis, with an assurance that he should be glad to enjoy his company till the time of his repast, and even till he retired to rest, but that he hoped his piety would excuse him for preferring obedience to the duty of civility; and that he might be allowed to retire to his cell at the usual hour, in order to rise at midnight to sing matins. The holy prelate highly approved this exact attention to duty, especially as the good man continued to apologize for his apparent neglect, in consequence of the festival of a Saint much honoured in the order. As this religious man was retiring to his cell, after taking leave with every possible expression of respect and honour, he was met by one of the regular officers of the house, called by them

* Spirit of St. Francis of Sales. tom. 1st. Part III.

couriers, but styled by others, procurators, and was asked, whither he was going, and how he had disposed of the Bishop of Geneva? "I have left him," said he, "in his room, and have taken leave, in order to go to our cell, and sing the midnight matins on account of the festival of to-morrow?" "Indeed," replied the procurator, "reverend father you are wonderfully skilled in the forms of politeness. What! it is but a feast of the order, and do we daily see in this dreary desert Bishops of his description? Do you not know, that God is pleased with the offerings of hospitality, and beneficence? You will always find leisure to chaunt the Divine praises; matins will not be wanting on other occasions, and who can be more proper to entertain such a prelate than you? What a shame for the house, if you were to leave him thus alone." "My child," replied the general, "I believe you are right, and that I have done ill." On this he returned to the Bishop, and on entering his room, he said with the greatest coolness, "My Lord, as soon as I had left you, I met one of the officers of the house, who told me that I had acted very improperly in leaving you alone, and that I shall not fail to have occasions of singing matins, but that we shall not have every day the honour of seeing here the Bishop of Geneva. I yielded to the

justness of his observations, and I am returned to make an apology and beg forgiveness for my conduct; for I can assure your Lordship that I acted from pure ignorance, and that is the whole truth." The holy prelate, continues the Bishop of Belley, was enchanted with this singular openness, candor, ingenuity and simplicity, and he told me that his feelings were stronger than if he had witnessed a miracle. O how true, adds this same prelate, is that word of Jesus Christ! that heaven is not to be attained, but by the simplicity of children.

Scarce had Francis reached Annecy, when he received intelligence that the Pope, at the solicitation of the Duchess of Savoy, had granted the bulls for the coadjutorship of Geneva, to John Francis of Sales, his brother, with the title of Bishop of Chalcedon; that he had been consecrated at Turin, and that he was on the road to wait on him at Annecy. When he was informed of the approach of his brother, he went out to meet him, followed by the clergy, the magistrates, the leading persons of the city, and a crowd of people from the place and its neighbourhood. He insisted that the same precautions of delicacy should not be observed on the occasion, as he had shewn towards his predecessor. Fully deter-

mined to resign to him his whole authority, he had no difficulty in admitting him to a participation. He had sincerely wished for his early consecration; a circumstance which he would never consent to respecting himself during the life of his predecessor, in spite of every solicitation which had been made at the time of his first journey to the court of France; never did his humility appear with greater splendor than on this occasion. He conducted his coadjutor to the church, desired him to celebrate in his Pontifical attire; he himself assisted at the mass and received the holy sacrament; he likewise requested him to confer holy orders, and yielded to him the honours, while he shared with him the troubles and fatigues of the episcopal dignity. No instances of a nice and delicate conduct, no suspicions, no jealousies in the use of authority, which have ever been too common, were observed to take place between these venerable men; humility on one side, and great propriety of behaviour on the other, as well as the general virtue of both, contributed to form that union and concert, which no event could dissolve. Solely intent on the good of the Church, always engaged with God and His glory, they promoted with harmony the same purposes.

This perfect concord clearly appeared to be peculiarly the effect of virtue in the two brothers, as it did not originate in conformity of temper or similarity of disposition. Francis was of easy access, and ever displayed a goodness of heart and mildness of temper, which was irresistible, a degree of piety, tender, affectionate and full of compassion, ever ready to excuse and pardon the faults of his neighbour. The Bishop of Chalcedon on the contrary was of a serious cast, spoke little, and exhibited a certain austerity of manner; he even shewed a certain share of inflexibility towards sinners, and particularly towards clergymen, whose conduct was scandalous and incorrigible. He pardoned with sufficient facility the first offences; a relapse was treated in a different manner; it never failed to meet with proportionate punishment. This conduct appeared in the general visitation, which he was desired by Francis to make of the diocess, in order that they might both co-operate in the work of reformation. The Bishop of Chalcedon made a free use of the notes and papers of his brother; but besides this he obtained very accurate information concerning the lives and general conduct of the clergy; those whom his brother or himself had once pardoned, were, for the next offence, sent without mercy to the prison of the episcopal court.

Scarce was the visitation completed, than numbers of this description were in confinement. Francis could not disapprove the severity of his brother, but he felt an irresistible propensity to shew compassion to these unfortunate persons, who often availed themselves of this circumstance.

The gate of the prison was under an arch, through which the holy prelate had daily to pass, in order to celebrate the Divine mysteries; the prisoners knew the hour, and never failed, as he went by, to supplicate for pardon, and to entreat his compassion. His heart was affected with their cries; he neither could restrain nor conceal his tears; and he had no sooner celebrated mass, than reflecting on the infinite goodness of God towards sinners, and considering that He is never tired with granting pardon, that His mercy is moved by their tears, and cannot resist their earnest cries, he would exclaim: "What! can we fail in following so great a model? God has often condescended to be moved by my tears; and shall I remain insensible to those, which are shed by my brethren? He listens, He gives a favourable ear to the prayers of wretched creatures; and shall I, who am but a creature and a sinner like them, be deaf to their entreaties, and insensible to their distress?" He was unable to resist

the force of these reflections. He accordingly on his return would order the prison to be opened, make to the prisoners an expostulation blended with severity and mildness, oblige them to promise a reformation of their lives, and send them home. The Bishop of Chalcedon, who knew that the holy prelate was not actuated with less zeal than himself for the reformation of his diocess, and who could not refrain from admiring that goodness of heart, which rendered him so much alive to the distresses of his neighbour, still would venture to blame his conduct. "God," would he observe, "knows the recesses of the heart, and He pardons those only, whom He knows to be truly converted. You have not the same advantage, and yet you pardon all without distinction. There will be some, I acknowledge, who moved by your goodness, will change their conduct; but how many will be found, who will abuse the indulgence, and become incurable by your facility?" Then the humility of the holy prelate would lead him to make an apology, and to promise to behave with more severity in future; and these professions he really intended to carry into effect.

However, notwithstanding all his resolutions, he would act precisely in the same manner on the

first opportunity; his extreme goodness of heart never allowed him to see any one in distress, without an attempt to afford relief. At length the Bishop of Chalcedon, who was convinced that his indulgent conduct was carried too far, and that his goodness was abused, asked permission to retire, and alleged as a reason, that he could not bring his mind to sustain such daily contests with his brother on the facility of his disposition. His object was to lead his brother to an approbation of his own plan; and he succeeded in his purpose, which was to keep himself the keys of the prisons, and to be allowed to refuse them to the holy prelate, whenever he should ask to have them. Francis consented to the proposal without difficulty; "for," said he, "these unhappy persons excite my compassion, and I cannot be responsible for my own motions." The holy prelate by that arrangement subjected himself to the inability of pardoning his own priests; but it became necessary for him to take a longer road to his church, as it would have been impossible to withstand the tender feelings, which he experienced for all, whom he beheld in a state of suffering. We will not attempt to pronounce on the relative excellence of these two great prelates, of whom one possessed a mild, the other an austere character. Mildness carries with it irre-

sistible charms;) severity is sometimes rendered necessary. There are minds well formed, good hearts, that would be exasperated and disheartened by rigour. There are daring and rebellious spirits, which must be subdued, hard hearts which must be broken. Mildness, is more suitable to the disposition of a father; severity to that of a judge. Bishops have to sustain both characters; they must be at once both mild and severe. But to which on a comparison is the preference to be given, to mildness or to severity? To which should men discover the most propensity? God appears to have decided in favour of mildness by a miracle, which the Saint performed on the occasion here alluded to.

* There was in the episcopal prison a priest, who had been lately confined. A violent fever had seized his spirits, and deprived him of the use of reason. As his fever was removed, his senses did not return; on the contrary, insanity was converted, on the restoration of his strength, into the most violent fits of rage. His ungovernable and furious appearance made close confinement necessary. The holy prelate, who had given orders to that effect, repaired to the prison,

* Aug. of Sales. Book VI.

attended by his domestics; a strong gateway, through which he might be seen, closed the entrance of the place, in which he was confined, and scarcely proved a sufficient barrier; so much had his ungovernable fury added to his strength. Rage sparkled in his eyes, and appeared in his whole deportment; his clothes which he tore in pieces, and the foam which issued from his mouth, with the terrific howlings which he raised, filled with a secret horror the breasts of the beholders. The holy prelate was softened to tears at the sight; he looked at him for some time with great attention; then turning to his attendants, he said: "My brethren, you see the effects of sin, which is the original cause of all the disorders incident to human nature. You see how it effaces even the smallest traits of that Divine resemblance, to which we were created; and you can easily comprehend the value of that gift, which we receive by being endowed with reason, as well as the wretched situation of a man, who is bereaved of this noble faculty. But God, to whom this man belongs by so many titles, He who created him, who redeemed him with His precious blood, He, who is stronger than the devil, whose mercies exceed the measure of our guilt, will suffer him to remain no longer in this wretched state; let us entreat Him to have compassion on His creature."

He remained some time without speaking a word, in the most profound recollection; he then commanded the gateway to be opened. All his attendants were alarmed at the proposal; and each one, fearful of the consequences both to the Bishop and to himself, opposed the design. But the holy prelate, full of faith, and of that confidence in God, which overcomes every difficulty, assured them, that nothing was to be apprehended, and that the time of the Divine mercy was come for that unfortunate man. The gateway was opened; Francis entered without an attendant, and taking the madman by the hand, he said: "Brother have confidence in God." He then put his hand on his head, and adjusted his hair, which was in complete disorder. At that moment his fury was calmed; the trouble and agitation of his whole frame ceased; tranquillity beamed in his eyes and in his whole countenance, and no appearance of his former disorder was observed.

To calm the sea agitated by a violent tempest, would be deemed a great miracle; and perhaps it will be considered as not less miraculous to restore in an instant, tranquillity to a troubled mind, peace to a heart disturbed with the utmost violence of rage, and health to a frame which must at length have sunk under the convulsions of a

singular disorder. The most remarkable circumstance in this miraculous cure is, that it was as complete as it was sudden; and no doubt could be entertained on the subject, when the holy prelate was seen to take by the hand a man, who the moment before had been in such a state of agitation, to remove him from prison, and conduct him to his episcopal palace. There he clothed him, entertained him at his table, and sent him home so completely restored, that he never after felt the smallest return of a disorder, of which such strange effects have been recorded. Other miracles might be produced, which are related by the historians of his life; this must be postponed to the proper place. But this is sufficient to convince incredulity, that God is always wonderful in His Saints, that His arm is not shortened, that Christ has not deceived His followers when He told them, that those who should believe and confide in Him, should in every future age perform miracles as great and even greater than His own, and that heaven and earth shall pass away, but that nothing shall be able to hinder the execution of His infallible promises.

While these events took place at Annecy, the Duke of Savoy in the midst of a profound peace, beloved by his subjects, and esteemed by his neigh-

hours, thought only of carrying into effect the design which has been mentioned; and persuaded that the Spaniards, his neighbours in the Milanese, would always obstruct his plans of aggrandisement, and that their policy would lead them to favour his enemies, as they had lately shewn their partiality to the Duke of Mantua, he thought he could devise nothing more advantageous for his son, the Prince of Piedmont, than to strengthen his interests with an alliance with France. The succour, which that power had lately afforded him against the Spaniards, Vercelli which had been restored to him by the same means, and the advantageous peace, which he had concluded by the mediation and interest of France, had given him full proofs, that he could not too much court her protection, or form with her too close an alliance. This able Prince extended his views still farther; he was alarmed at the success of the Imperial arms, and began to apprehend, that the Emperor after establishing his authority in Germany, might be induced to renew the ancient claims of the empire in Italy. France alone was able to oppose such a design; and all the Princes, who share that beautiful portion of Europe, threatened with the yoke, could be delivered only by the help of such a power.

All these reasons induced him to dispatch the Baron de Marcieux to France. His commission was confined to two articles; to thank His Most Christian Majesty for the assistance, which he had afforded him, and for the peace, which had been concluded by his interposition. He was then directed to sound the inclinations of the court concerning the marriage of Christina of France, the King's sister, with the Prince of Piedmont. Marcieux found the court of France in the best possible dispositions with respect to the projected marriage. Henry IV. had devised the same scheme, and a resolution to that effect, in the event of a proposal, was discovered among his papers. The esteem which was entertained for that great Prince, did not allow any deviation from his views; the relative interests of the two countries were not altered, the same principles of policy were still maintained. But Marcieux, who was invested only with the character of an agent, was not a personage sufficiently distinguished, to terminate so great an affair. He sent information to the Duke his master, of the dispositions of the court; and that Prince immediately appointed for that memorable embassy his son the Prince Cardinal, and the holy Bishop of Geneva to conduct the affair, and give the benefit of his counsels. As he was the person of all others, for whom the

Cardinal entertained the highest esteem and regard, his Eminence wrote to him to testify his joy on the occasion; and to beg him to hold himself in readiness, that he might take him up at Annecy. The only difficulty, which Francis could raise against the plan, was removed by the appointment of a coadjutor. His diocess was not in any danger of suffering loss from his absence, and he had no hesitation in entrusting it for a time to the care of the great prelate, who was destined to succeed him. Besides, he was persuaded that if his diocess ought to be dear to him, the state, of which he formed a part, should be, by no means, viewed with the eyes of indifference; that being under the obligation of praying for it, he might be allowed to devote to its service a part of his attention, when Providence called him to that task without any solicitation on his own part; and he was not ignorant that St. Ambrose and many other holy Bishops, whose sanctity had been attested by miracles, had accepted of embassies from the sole view of serving the state. A particular reason likewise contributed to hasten his determination on this business. A considerable part of his diocess depended on the crown of France, and he had very important concerns to negotiate at that court, on the issue of which the

re-establishment or the support of the Catholic religion in those parts entirely depended.

Convinced by all these reasons, that he should not violate his duty, by accompanying the Cardinal, he informed him by letter, that he would hold himself in readiness for the journey, and that he felt as he ought, the great honour which his father the Duke, and himself, were so kind as to confer upon him. After that, he was employed solely in giving his orders for the regulation of his diocese during his absence, that nothing might be wanting but his personal attendance, and that no change might take place in the regulations which he had framed. He then entrusted his diocese to the care of his brother, the Bishop of Chalcedon, and joined the Cardinal on his arrival at Annecy. The Cardinal was attended by the Count of Verue, and Antony Favre, first President of Savoy, the intimate friend of the holy prelate. Thus the Duke had surrounded his son, by persons of the most distinguished merit in the Church, the army and the magistracy; but the holy prelate was principally entrusted with the care of the young Prince, as the others were only selected to grace the retinue, and assist with their advice. The Duke, in making this choice, had acted with his usual prudence. He not only

selected the most approved and skilful men in his dominions, but he considered that these three persons were united by indissoluble bands of friendship; that thus they would act in concert, and that one would not aim at an ascendant, over the mind of the Prince to the prejudice of another. Such a circumstance but too frequently occurs, to the detriment of the concerns of Princes.

The Cardinal of Savoy arrived at Paris in the beginning of the year one thousand six hundred and nineteen, and was received with all the honours due to his birth and his character. Francis there found a part of his ancient friends, and did not remain long without forming other connections both in the city and at the court. The beautiful writings which he had published to the world, had acquired him an extraordinary reputation; every one considered him as a prelate at once holy and skilful; there was no affair of any importance, on which he was not consulted, no assembly of piety to which he was not invited, no religious enterprise, which he did not animate by his presence, his attention and his advice; at the court and in the city, all were observed to be equally eager to place themselves under his direction, and it was deemed difficult to conceive,

how a single man could be equal to such multiplied occupations. His business however, did not hinder him from preaching the lent at St. André des Arcs. All Paris crowded to his sermons; and the pressure was generally so great, that it became difficult to accommodate even Cardinals, Bishops and Princes, with seats. His maxims on the eloquence of the pulpit have been already explained. He did not neglect the graces of oratory, but he paid much more regard to the solidity of his matter. Incapable of aiming at reputation, he sought only the conversion of souls; full of meekness on all other occasions, in the pulpit he appeared inflamed with zeal. But what made the greatest impression on his hearers was, that he said nothing, which he had not himself first reduced to practice; and the sanctity of his life corresponded so well with that of his discourses, that his example gained all those, whom his sermons had contributed to move. Libertins, atheists, heretics, all yielded to the impression; and the light of his understanding, joined to his incomparable meekness, won every heart, and subdued every mind. The historians of his life relate several instances of this kind; one of them will be sufficient in this place.

Among the persons, whose notice his knowledge and sanctity attracted, there was a German from

the palatinate, of the name of Philip Jacob. He had been a minister among the Calvinists, and had lately been converted to the faith. He was a man of rough manners, devoid of good breeding; possessed of the vanity which belongs to men of slender learning, not well confirmed in the faith, hesitating whether he should remain in the Church, or return to the communion which he had left; a man of a capricious and ungovernable temper, and in particular full of the prepossessions of the Calvinists against Bishops and the episcopal character. He accosted the holy prelate with his usual abruptness, and asked him, if the Apostles travelled in gilded carriages, a situation in which he had lately seen him; and if he allowed himself to employ the revenues of his church in pompous equipages, like that by which he was attended? Francis replied, with a degree of politeness, to which his visitor had no claim, that he had neither carriage nor equipage; that even if he should desire such things, he had not the means of obtaining such a distinction; that the inhabitants of Geneva, in usurping the revenues of his church, had placed things on a different footing; but that he felt less sensibly such a loss, than that of their souls; and that as to himself, he would give with pleasure the little that remained to him, to gain them to Jesus Christ; that the car-

riages and equipage, which his visitor had seen, did not belong to him, but to the Prince of Savoy, or to the King, who frequently sent them to do honour to his episcopal character, or to the Cardinal, whom he accompanied; that he absolutely insisted, that they should be made use of, and that he did not consider it a duty to quarrel with so great a Prince for an affair of such trifling consequence. As to the Apostles, added he, they made use of carriages, when it became necessary; we have an example of this in St. Philip, who made no difficulty to ascend the chariot of the Eunuch of the Queen of Ethiopia; and that undoubtedly he must have seen that fact recorded in the Acts of the Apostles. "I knew very well," added the holy prelate who himself related the conversation, "that this Philip was not an Apostle, but there are some people who do not investigate matters so closely, and besides Philip was an Apostolic man, and the argument was not less conclusive." "But," continued Jacob, "is not residence of Divine right? and while you are at the court of France, what is to become of your people in Savoy, entrusted to your care?" Francis replied, that no one was more convinced than himself of the necessity of residence; but that he believed, that the good of the state, and the particular business of his diocese, which could

be adjusted only at court, were sufficient reasons to justify an occasional dispensation; that he had made suitable arrangements before his departure, and had placed his flock under the care of a Bishop equal to the charge; and that he was well satisfied, that his diocess would not suffer from his absence.

Jacob then asked him, why Bishops, who called themselves successors of the Apostles, did not work miracles like them; why if they had succeeded to their authority, they had not inherited this power? "This question," replied Francis, "has been decided by the Apostle himself, when he says, that miracles are for infidels and not for the faithful. They were necessary for the purpose of establishing the Church, to induce mankind to believe that God was the author of it; to engage them to enter its pale, and to form that holy society, which was to succeed to the Jewish people, and to perpetuate the worship of the true God to the end of time. But now when this society has been established, when this new people has been formed, when idols are destroyed, the law abolished, and the Church is spread over the whole earth, miracles are no longer necessary, and for that reason they are become extremely rare." "But I doubt not," added he, "that if

any occasion occurred, which should demand an extraordinary interposition of Providence, God would still display His power, either by the ministry of Bishops, or by the means of any other persons whom He should employ; for the power of performing miracles was never confined exclusively to the Apostles." It has already been observed, that the character of Jacob was of a very singular cast; for that reason the reader will not be surprised to learn, that he carried his insolence so far as to say to the holy prelate, with his hand raised: "If I were to give you a blow on the cheek, would you present the other to receive a second blow, as the Gospel ordains?" "I do not know if I should do it," replied Francis, "but I well know what would be my duty under such a circumstance." There is indeed no species of brutality, which does not yield to consummate meekness. Jacob was so surprised, and at the same time so affected at the moderation of the holy prelate, that he spoke of it in every place with admiration; but he added, that if Francis had treated him roughly, and had answered him in the same tone in which he himself had spoken, he should have returned to the communion of the Calvinists. "For," said he, "humility and meekness are so essential to sanctity, that if the Bishop of Geneva had not possessed these two

qualities, I should have considered him as a hypocrite, and an impostor."

During these transactions, the marriage of the Prince of Piedmont was concluded; and Christina of France having been espoused by proxy, arrangements were made to provide an establishment. The Princess, who entertained for Francis an esteem and veneration, which could not be exceeded, chose him for her first almoner, with a view to detain him and place herself under his direction; but that very circumstance prevented him from accepting the charge. He thanked the Princess for the intended honour, but he observed to her, that the employment, which she offered him, was incompatible with the residence which he was obliged to observe in his diocess; that God was his witness, that the soul of her Royal Highness was as dear to him as his own; but that God had stationed him in the church of Geneva, that the engagement which he had there contracted, admitted of no compromise, and that death alone could dissolve the connection. The Princess still continued her solicitations, and he at length told her, that since she insisted on his acceptance of the charge, he would consent to the proposal, but he requested it might be on two conditions; the first was, that he might be allowed

to observe residence in his diocess; the other, that when he should be prevented from fulfilling the duties of the situation, he should not receive the emolument. "Your scruples," said the Princess, "are carried too far. If I choose to allow you the emoluments of office without your personal attendance, what harm will you do in accepting them?" "Madam," replied the holy prelate, "I feel myself happy in my poverty; I fear riches, they have ruined thousands, and they might prove fatal to me." The Princess was obliged to consent to the two conditions; and Francis accepted the charge of first almoner, and performed the duties of it, as long as the Princess of Piedmont remained in France, and on some other occasions, but always on the proposed terms. After he had accepted this office, the Princess, by way of installation, made him a present of a diamond of great value. "This is yours," said she, "on condition, that you keep it from a regard for me;" "I promise you this," said the holy prelate, "except the poor should stand in need of relief." "In that event," replied the Princess, who was a worthy daughter of Henry the Great, "be satisfied to pawn the diamond, and I will take care to redeem it." "I should be afraid," replied Francis, "that such an event would happen too often; and I should abuse

your kindness." He had indeed such a tender regard for the poor, as induced him never to refuse their requests ; and when he was without money, he has been known to part with the plate of his chapel, and even with the clothes on his back.

In the mean time, his assiduous attention in visiting hospitals, and in affording daily relief to those who were attacked with contagious distempers, threw him into a dangerous illness. It then appeared to what a degree he was beloved. The hospital of Ancre, in which he had apartments, was perpetually crowded with Cardinals, Bishops, Princes, persons of quality, and people of the lower orders, who were eager to enquire after his health, or to visit him, as soon as he was able to receive them. He at length recovered from that illness ; and when he had so far regained his strength, as to be able to go and thank their Majesties for their visits and kind enquiries, he received intelligence that a rich Abbey was become vacant, and was assured, that if he would ask the King for it, his Majesty would confer it on him with pleasure. " I will beware of doing any such thing," replied the holy prelate ; " how could I ask for that favour, which if it were offered, I should be disposed to decline ?" He added, that the revenues of his Bishopric, poor

as it was, were sufficient for his support, and that he would accept of no more.

In the mean time, the court departed for Fontainebleau; and Francis, who never left the Cardinal, was obliged to repair thither. One day as he was walking alone in the garden, he was met by the Cardinal of Retz, the Bishop of Paris, who told him, that he was delighted to see him alone, that he had long desired to have a private conversation with him, and without giving him time to answer, he said: "You see the rank which I fill at the court and in the council, and you have often witnessed the pressure of business, with which I am overwhelmed; at the same time I am burdened with the government of the extensive diocese of Paris; that would require my undivided attention, and yet I can allow it but a small portion of my time, and frequently none at all. The account which I am to render to God fills me with dismay; I should wish to restore tranquillity to my conscience on this subject; what is your advice?" "Since you do me the honour to ask my advice," replied Francis, "I cannot conceal from you this truth, that you are perfectly right, to listen to the reproaches of your conscience on a matter of this importance; but you possess but one method of regaining peace of

mind, and that is, to leave either the Ministry or the Bishopric." "I have however found," replied the Cardinal, "another means; I have opened the matter to the King, and have obtained his approbation, and this is to make you my coadjutor; and I have the authority of his Majesty to offer you a pension of 20,000 livres, while the Bishopric of Geneva is to remain in the hands of your brother the Bishop of Chalcedon, to obtain the consent both of the Duke of Savoy and of the Pope for these purposes, and to defray all necessary charges. I join my request to his, and beg you not to refuse me this favour. Paris stands in need of a Bishop like you; you are there esteemed and beloved, and you will assuredly do more good in that place, than in your Bishopric of Geneva." "I cannot sufficiently acknowledge," replied Francis, "the honour intended me by His Majesty and your Eminence; but you would never have thought of such a plan, if you had known me well; and it becomes a duty to correspond with your friendship and to exhibit myself in my native dress. As I cannot disguise myself from my own eyes, nor be insensible of my own incapacity of governing my diocess alone, I have been necessitated to ask for a coadjutor; and how can I have the temerity to undertake the care of a diocess so extensive as that of Paris?"

God requires me to be the Bishop of Geneva. He has given me this church as my spouse, and no consideration can induce me to leave her for another. Besides I am advancing in years, and am approaching to the end of my career; repose is now more suitable to me than action; and to open to you my whole mind, I will tell you, that if my judgment be followed, and I can obtain permission, I am determined to relinquish my Bishopric, and to retire to a solitude, in order to prepare my soul to appear before God. Far from diverting me from so good a purpose, assist me to carry it into execution; I have lived long enough for others; it is now time to live only for God and to devote myself totally to Him."

He spoke these last words with such feeling, as made a deep impression on the Cardinal. His Eminence admired the opposite effects of the spirit of God and of that of the world, on the human heart; he observed that the former conceals our situation from our own eyes, and deprives us of the knowledge of those perfections which are given to us, in order to fix our attention on our defects, which are often exaggerated beyond the reality; while the spirit of the world, always blind, always deceitful, persuades us that we have qualities, which we do not possess, conceals from

us our real defects, and engages us in undertakings, which are above our strength, and in which, if we knew ourselves better, we should never have embarked. "Thus it is," exclaimed he "that a prelate so holy, so enlightened, so zealous, judges himself unworthy of the episcopal station, while persons of a bold and daring character, devoid of these qualities and exhibiting in their conduct whatever is the reverse of this description, leave nothing unattempted to attain that dignity." After these reflections the Cardinal renewed his solicitations; but he had to treat with a prelate of a firm character, who knew the real value of riches, of rank and of fortune, and who was not to be driven from his purpose.

* Some time after he preached before their Majesties in the church of the oratorians, and on Christmas Eve at the Capuchins before the Queen, always with the same success. At length in the beginning of the year one thousand six hundred and twenty, the Cardinal of Savoy and the Princess of Piedmont departed for Turin, with the holy prelate, who accompanied them only to Annecy. On his arrival, he performed three actions, which cannot be sufficiently com-

* Aug. of Sales. Book VI.

mended. During his absence, the officers of the episcopal court had gained at Chamberry a considerable law-suit against several gentlemen of his diocess, with great costs, which his steward was determined rigorously to exact. The holy prelate was not of this opinion. "I consented," said he, "to this suit, only because I thought it just, and because my private interests were not concerned, but the rights of my church, which it is not lawful for me to abandon. As for the costs, I will not receive them. God preserve me from availing myself of such advantages to the prejudice of any one, much less to the detriment of any of my flock, whom I ought ever to treat with paternal affection." The steward was preparing to reply, and to say, that the costs amounted to a great sum, which it was necessary to receive, in order to replace the money which had been spent on the suit. "And do you account it a small gain," replied the holy prelate, "to win the hearts of those whom this procedure has rendered my enemies? For my part, I consider it as every thing." He instantly sent for these gentlemen, and to their surprise remitted them the costs, which they had never thought of asking. He who knows the value of hearts, will never think that they can be purchased at too dear a price. A single enemy is always too much ;

friends cannot be too much multiplied; this was one of the favourite maxims of Francis; accordingly no man was ever more sincerely beloved. This appeared at his death; his whole diocess assumed the dress of mourning, and remained inconsolable for his loss, though he seemed to revive in the person of his brother.

This action was followed by another of a not less generous nature. It has already appeared from the fifth book of this history, that one of the rights of the Bishop of Geneva was to inherit the property of those families, of which the fathers died without issue. The case happened about this time. A rich man, whose property devolved on the holy prelate, died without leaving any other than collateral heirs. They immediately repaired to Annecy to transact this business with the episcopal steward, who carried his pretensions to great lengths, having been informed, that the deceased had left considerable property. The collateral heirs contended, that it was considerable, and the parties were not likely to adjust the business. The holy prelate being informed of the circumstance, desired that the affair might be referred to him. The heirs made their appearance; and Francis begged them to declare in conscience, what might be the amount of the

property in question. They had the effrontery to protest, that it might amount to twenty golden crowns. "Well," replied Francis, "give me the sum, and take your discharge." By this disingenuous artifice, they obtained a rich inheritance at a trifling expence. The surprise of the steward can scarcely be described, when he learned from them the history of the transaction. He did not fail to make a remonstrance to the holy prelate with a degree of zeal, which bordered on rudeness. "What can you desire?" said Francis; "if I had not possessed wherewith to satisfy the earnest calls of charity, the affair would still have been worse; for even in that extremity, I should have made no demand." This right of his church was extremely painful to his feelings, and he never exacted his dues with rigour. However he thought himself under an inability, perhaps under an obligation of not relinquishing it.

During his last journey to Paris with the Cardinal of Savoy, he had saved a year and half's revenue. When the aggregate saving was produced, he replied, "I have not earned it," and he could not be induced to accept the sum. However as his cathedral was ill provided with plate, he ordered six superb candlesticks and a

silver lamp to be purchased with the money, and thus made a handsome present to his church. These three examples fully demonstrate, that with the magnanimity of Francis, it is possible to exercise liberality without being rich. Never was man fonder of giving, and more averse from receiving than he; and that was one of his favourite maxims: "If you have much, give much; if you have little, give little; when a person is reduced to the necessity of asking, he must be supposed to be in want; it is an insult to refuse him, or to raise the value of what is bestowed." That conduct he avoided with extreme caution; and frequently his benefactions were almost unperceived.

* The death of Paul V. which happened about this time, (1619) gave occasion to the election of Cardinal Ludovisio, who took the name of Gregory XV. In the beginning of his Pontificate he dispatched a brief to the holy prelate, containing a commission to preside in his name at the general chapter of the Feuillans, which was to be held at Pignerol. He instantly departed, impressed with such a respect for the holy See,

* Aug. of Sales. Book VI.

as not to allow himself the smallest delay, when he had to execute injunctions from that quarter. The pious order of the Feuillans, hitherto so well united, was now disturbed with a division, which had imperceptibly taken place; and though the rigorous discipline, which had there been practised, had yet suffered no material injury, a general apprehension still prevailed on the subject. The minds of the fathers, thrown into a state of agitation, could not be brought to an agreement on the election of a head. Every party expressed an apprehension of a schism, and yet they all seemed ready to plunge into the abyss. Francis on this occasion gave a striking proof of the most consummate prudence, and of that exquisite address in governing men, which he possessed in the highest degree; every obstacle was removed by his powers of reason, every heart was won by his incomparable meekness; and by the unanimous election of a general, he restored peace to that holy order, and with peace, he re-established order. In the choice of father John of St. Francis, every voice was united. He was a man of eminent piety, and of consummate knowledge; independently of his acquaintance with living languages he was a perfect master of the Greek and Latin, of the ancient oriental languages, the Hebrew, the Arabic, the Chaldaic and

the Syriac. His great knowledge, which enabled him to favour the world with many learned works, did not prevent him from writing the life of the holy prelate, one of his first performances in the French language.

The holy prelate having adjusted the business, which brought him to Pignerol, took his departure for Turin to pay his respects to their Royal Highnesses. He was there received with all the distinction due to his merit and his virtue. He thought only of performing a journey from motives of civility, but God conducted him thither to justify the character of a person of quality, who had been a little before disgraced, and sent into banishment by the Duke of Savoy. A nobleman belonging to the court, whose influence was universally dreaded, had surprised the vigilant mind of the Duke; and the calumny had been conducted with so much artifice, that the exile was precluded from every possible method of making his justification. No one ventured to espouse his cause, and the most virtuous persons were afraid of inflaming the resentment of the calumniator. Francis believed it unworthy of his character, to observe the same delicate precaution. He obtained information of the pro-

ceeding, repaired to the Duke, and spoke with so much force in favour of the accused, that he demonstrated the innocence of his conduct, and procured his restoration to favour. This action was extremely applauded; and indeed it discovers a great soul, and that share of magnanimity, which belongs to the character of a Bishop. His friends, however were seized with alarm, and failed not to tell him, that they were well acquainted with the ungovernable and vindictive temper of the nobleman, at whose expence he had justified the innocent exile; that he had every thing to fear from his resentment, and that it would be prudent to secure his personal safety by extreme vigilance. "Every one repeats to me the same advice," said the holy prelate, "but my life is in the hands of God; at all events I have but done my duty; for if Bishops do not espouse the cause of innocence under oppression, who will undertake that delicate task." The fears of the friends of Francis were not without foundation; the calumniator considered himself ruined at court, and placed above any farther restraint. For some days he sought for Francis with unavailing solicitude. At length, hearing that he was celebrating mass at a church in the city, he repaired thither with a determination to dispatch him as he should go

out: At that critical moment, God changed the heart of the assassin, who was so moved with the majesty and devotion, with which the prelate performed this holy action, that he abandoned his nefarious design. He even employed the credit of his friends to solicit the friendship of Francis, and desired assurances to be made to him, that during the remainder of his life, he should ever shew him that veneration, which was due to his extraordinary merit and virtue.

The holy prelate before his departure went to take leave of the Princess of Piedmont. As she did not observe the diamond which she had given him, she enquired what was become of it. "Madam," replied Francis, "you may easily guess." "Possibly," said the Princess, "it was not fine enough; I will give you one of a greater value; but do not dispose of it, as you did of the other." "Madam," said Francis with a smile, "I cannot be answerable for myself; I am very ill qualified to keep any precious articles." She made her intended present, and Francis departed some days after. As he was on the road, his attendants imagined that they had lost the diamond, and spoke to him of it in great alarm. "Is that all," said the holy prelate, "you are

troubled on a slight account; if a poor person should find it, the loss would not be great." In a short time the diamond was found; and his attendants discovered joy proportioned to their regret for the supposed loss. "Keep it better," said the Bishop; "our poor may stand in need of it." This proved to be the purpose to which he applied its value; being in want of money to answer the demands of charity, he immediately put it in pawn. The story was reported to the Princess by a gentleman of Annecy; for on the mention of the diamond in question, this gentleman said; "I have seen it; it does not belong to the Bishop of Geneva, but to all the poor of Annecy." The holy prelate on his return thought only of preparing himself for death; he had on some occasions felt a preconception of that event, and he perceived his strength to be daily decreasing. His age was not great; but his incessant labours and continued mortifications had impaired an excellent constitution. However before we relate this death, so precious in the sight of God, so worthy of his holy life, we have thought it an indispensable duty to record the establishment of the holy order of the Visitation. This may be pronounced to be his master-piece; it is a standing proof of his wisdom, of his enlightened

mind, of his incomparable meekness, of his eminent piety; and if the history of this institute has been delayed till this place, it was done with a view, to exhibit a connected and uninterrupted narrative of this memorable transaction.

END OF THE SIXTH BOOK.

THE LIFE

OF

Saint Francis of Sales.

BOOK VII.

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THE LIFE
OF
SAINT FRANCIS OF SALES,
BISHOP AND PRINCE
OF GENEVA.

BOOK THE SEVENTH.

THERE would be a considerable deficiency in the history of the Visitation, and in that of St. Francis of Sales, were we not to record the actions of Madam de Chantal, his spiritual daughter, who co-operated with such advantage to her character in the foundation of this pious Order. To separate the mention of persons after death, who during their lives were connected by so holy a union, would be in some measure, to violate the order of Divine Providence. Besides, their actions, their views, their designs, are so blended together, that they cannot possibly be disunited. None of the historians of the holy prelate have yet made the attempt; it has been deemed a duty to imitate them, and to begin the

history of the Order of the Visitation by that of the foundress.

* The maiden name of Madam de Chantal was Jane Frances Fremiot. She was the daughter of Benignus Fremiot, President of the Parliament of Burgundy, and of Margaret de Berbisy, both descended from the most ancient families of the province. Three children were the fruit of this marriage; Margaret Fremiot, afterwards married to the Baron of Effran, of the house of Neuchese; Andrew Fremiot, Archbishop of Bourges, and Jane Frances, the subject of this narrative, who was afterwards married to the Baron de Chantal. She was born at Dijon the twenty-third of January, in the year one thousand five hundred and seventy-two, on the festival of St. John the Almoner; a circumstance, which was regarded as a presage of the tender love which during life she shewed for the poor, and of which she ever gave such edifying proofs. As she early lost her mother, her father who was much engaged in the duties of his situation, gave her in marriage on the first occasion to the Baron de Chantal. This nobleman was the eldest son of the house of Rabutin; he was possessed of merit and of

* Life by Maupas. Part I.

valour; and these qualities secured, to him the esteem, the friendship and the protection of Henry the Great. She lived in the marriage state with the same exemplary conduct, which she had exhibited in the state of virginity; she was the model of married persons by her discreet and virtuous behaviour, and by her tender regard for her husband, as she had ever proved the pattern of the young ladies of her age by her modesty, her piety and her meekness.* Her first care was to introduce order into her household, by regulating the time of prayer, and by obliging her servants to assist daily at the sacrifice of the mass. She wished them to be sensible, that God was their first master, and the most worthy of their services, and that they ought to be subordinate to any one under Him, only because the order of his Providence demanded it, and because He had Himself established this subordination so necessary among mankind. She carefully procured them suitable instruction, discreetly assigned them proper occupation, and kindly alleviated their indispositions and their wants. She on those occasions dropped the authority of the mistress, to assume the tenderness of the mother, fully persuaded that she was serving Christ in their persons, since He has said:

* Abridgement of the life of Madam de Chantal.

What you have done for one of these little ones, you have done for me.

Fully intent on establishing order in the house of her husband, which stood in much need of arrangement, she began by regulating her own conduct. Her devotions, her occupations, her amusements, even her dress, were all subjected to rule; in all these articles she observed that modesty, which her regard for her husband would admit; and it was observed of her, that she exhibited no appearance of youth but in her countenance. Her ordinary occupations consisted in reading good books, in working for the altar, or for the poor. Always attentive to anticipate their wants, or to relieve them, she was accustomed to say, that she preferred her petitions to God, with additional confidence, when for the love of Him, she had been engaged in relieving those, whom He had been pleased to call his members. She set a peculiar value on public prayer, and had an extraordinary faith in its efficacy; for this reason, she was assiduous in her attendance at the service of the parish, and never failed to conduct thither her husband and her servants. During the occasional absence of her husband, who was obliged to devote a part of the year to military pursuits or to the court, she never

went abroad; innocent diversions, play, good cheer, even visits not prescribed by duty or by decorum, were all suspended. On his return her kind attention to him engaged her to change her mode of acting; she even relaxed her practices of devotion. At length she felt some remorse for her complaisance, and thought her duty to God and to her husband perfectly compatible: from that time she never intermitted her exercises of piety. The Baron de Chantal, who was a nobleman of honour and virtue, never complained of her conduct. His esteem for her was proportioned to his regard, and he acknowledged himself, that time served only to increase the ardour of his affection. One son and three daughters whom she bore him strengthened their union. Every thing conspired to promote their happiness; but this world presents no real and permanent enjoyment; all objects are of a mixed nature, and the uncertainty of those, on which we fix our affections, is sufficient to correct the errors of our judgment. Madam de Chantal was called to a degree of sanctity too eminent not to be subjected to trials; and God jealous of her heart, would suffer no rival.

A relation of the Baron de Chantal, who was his neighbour and intimate friend, paid him a

visit, and engaged him to partake of the amusement of the chace. The Baron was as indifferent to that species of recreation, as his relative was passionately addicted to it; he was however willing to gratify a friend. On that day, he happened to be dressed in clothes, which resembled the colour of the deer; his relation seeing him through the bushes, mistook him for his prey, and shot him in the thigh. The Baron instantly fell, exclaiming that he was a dead man; his friend hastened to his assistance, and the Baron observing him to be in an agony of pain, said with feeling: "My cousin, my dear friend, this stroke was unintentional on your part, it was a mistake, I pardon you from the bottom of my heart." He afterwards sent four of his attendants to four different parishes, that he might with more certainty depend on the advantage of a confessor. He dispatched at the same time an express to his wife, with positive orders, to conceal the circumstance, that the wound was mortal. He was conveyed in the mean time to a house in the nearest village, to which Madam de Chantal instantly repaired. As soon as he saw her, he said: "Madam, the orders of heaven are just; they are to be respected and loved, and I must meet death with resignation." The extreme affliction of Madam de Chantal prevented her from

giving any answer; her tears and sighs sufficiently indicated her feelings. At that moment a priest appeared; and the first care of the Baron was to make his confession; a duty which he performed with such presence of mind and such Christian sentiments, as evinced that his mind was completely engrossed with the concern of his salvation. After his confession was concluded, the first person who entered the room, was the unfortunate relation, who had inflicted the wound; he went to throw himself at the feet of Madam de Chantal, and to ask her pardon. Despair was painted on his countenance, and his grief was so excessive, that it could be equalled only by the unappeasable sorrow of the Baroness. As soon as the Baron de Chantal saw him, he stretched out his hand to him, and addressing his discourse to his wife he said: "Madam, you must pardon him, God requires it, and I entreat you to the same effect. As to me, I pardon him with my whole heart." As soon as the wound was dressed, he was conveyed home, where Madam de Chantal, amidst the affliction with which she was overwhelmed, performed the duties of a nurse, a physician and a director. But all expence, all her care and prayers, proved unavailing. God, who knows better than ourselves, what is proper for us, often refuses a less favour to grant some-

thing of more importance. On the fifth day, the patient was seized with fever; and on the ninth, after having received the sacraments with uncommon piety, he entreated his wife, and commanded his son, on no account to entertain any thoughts of revenging his death. He told them, that he pardoned his kinsman, with his whole heart, and ordered this pardon to be committed to writing in the register of the parish, together with the injunction, which he gave his family to entertain no resentment in consequence of his death. A moment after he expired, and left Madam de Chantal in such distress, as is more easily conceived than described.

It is thus that God by singular and unforeseen strokes, knows how to disengage hearts, which He is resolved to possess without a rival. His consequent designs on Madam de Chantal, demanded a sacrifice of this magnitude. Happy the person, who without knowing the designs of God, without considering the extent of the sacrifice to be made, shews a ready submission! More happy he, who can view with fond delight the will of his heavenly Father, and who with the real feelings of a son, believes he can never purchase at too high a price, that holy liberty, which enables us to live solely for Him! These were the senti-

ments of Madam de Chantal; her conduct on this occasion discovered, that the same strokes, which bruise the straw, separate the good grain; that gold is refined in the same fire, in which chaff is consumed; and that the same afflictions which harden the wicked, and excite in their minds doubts concerning Providence, purify the faithful, and serve but to increase their faith and their love. She indulged in sensibility as far as she thought it lawful, by shewing a regard for an object, which she believed herself bound to love; she was grieved to see those bonds so soon dissolved, which God Himself had formed. But reflecting at the same time on that independent Being, who has done nothing but for Himself, on that supreme power, to which all must yield without a murmur of complaint, and on that infinite goodness, which permits evil only for a greater good, she exclaimed with Job: God has given, and God has taken away; if we receive from His hands the goods, which He is pleased to bestow, why shall we not receive from the same beneficent source, the afflictions, which He thinks proper to send. This submission to the orders of God soon discovered to her more clearly His designs upon her; she perceived that she ought not to have shewn such a powerful attachment, to ~~that~~ which was so easily lost; and that God

alone being exempt from that decay, which belongs to created objects, and being the only good, which can give ease to our hearts, and which can never be wrested from us against our inclinations, He alone should command our attachment. She soon felt that He, without any external aid, can impart consolation to those, whom He afflicts; and she afterwards acknowledged herself unable to comprehend, how she could feel such calm amidst such excruciating sufferings.

In this mingled state of affliction and joy, she considered it a duty to follow the counsel of St. Paul; disengaged from marriage, she determined no more to place herself in that situation. God was more considered in this resolution, than her veneration for her departed husband, or the love which she bore to her children. For to avoid all temptation of breaking it, she by a formal vow gave herself irrevocably to God, in order to live solely for Him. From that period, nothing human appeared in her conduct; of her disposition she exhibited a striking proof, when to shew the sincerity with which she pardoned the death of her husband, she kindly stood godmother to one of the children of the person, by whom he had been unfortunately killed. Some time after, she distributed all her clothes to the poor, and

bound herself by vow, to wear woollen only. She dismissed a part of her servants, after giving them a proper recompence, and retained in her household those only, who were absolutely necessary for herself and her four children. She then bestowed all her care on their education, dividing her day between her attention to them, to labour and to prayer. She experienced a vehement desire of finding a director according to the heart of God, who might conduct her in His holy ways; and knowing how difficult it is to meet with a person of this description, and how dangerous it must prove to a docile soul to be deceived in such a search, she ardently asked the favour of God, she fasted and gave alms with this view. A lady of her acquaintance, knowing her difficulty on this subject, advised her to apply to her director, of whom she spoke in high strains of commendation. The holy widow adopted the advice, though with a secret repugnance, which she was never able to overcome: indeed he was not the person, whom God had destined for her, and no less distinguished a character than the Bishop of Geneva was necessary to lead her to that height of perfection, which she afterwards attained under his direction. She however shewed to the priest recommended to her very great submission, though always with the same repug-

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nance; but her profound humility induced her to think, that no plan could be more reprehensible, than that of conducting herself.

At length in the year one thousand six hundred and four, the parliament of Burgundy having engaged the holy prelate to preach the lent at Dijon, she repaired thither to hear him. As soon as she observed him in the pulpit, she felt an interior persuasion that he was the person, whom God had destined to be her director. The holy prelate on his side noticed her, and recollected the vision, which he is recorded to have had at the castle of Sales; he seemed to recognise her as the person, who had been shewn to him as the instrument, that God designed to employ in founding a new Order. On leaving the pulpit, he was curious to know her name, and meeting with the Archbishop of Bourges, his intimate friend, he enquired who she was. He was informed that she was the Archbishop's sister, widow of the deceased Baron de Chantal. As he often went to dine with the President Fremiot, the father of the holy widow, he soon had an opportunity of conversing with her, and he impressed her with an exalted opinion of the sanctity of his conversation, as he had already convinced her of the superior excellence of his sermons. Thus an ac-

quaintance commenced, and such a union was formed, as led to the establishment of the Order of the Visitation. Madam de Chantal was extremely desirous of laying open the state of her soul to the holy prelate; but she was restrained by a vow, which cannot be sufficiently blamed, that her director had ordered her to make, never to divulge the secrets of her conscience, to any one but to him. One day as the holy prelate thought her dressed in a more fashionable style than usual, he asked, whether neatness would be less consulted, if she were to have no lace to her hood, nor any ornamental buttons to her handkerchief. The holy widow instantly cut off the buttons, and unsewed the lace. The prelate, who was fully aware of the merit of the smallest sacrifice, performed with a view to please God, admired her docility, and judged from that instance, that with proper direction, she would make a distinguished progress in virtue.

About this time the director of Madam de Chantal was under the necessity of performing a journey; during his absence God permitted her to be infested with temptations of so violent a nature, that from an apprehension of losing her senses, she applied to the Bishop of Geneva, exposed to him the secrets of her heart, and felt her

mind so much relieved, that it seemed to her, as she afterwards said, that an angel and not a man had been conversing with her. The facility, with which the holy prelate dissipated the trouble with which she was disturbed, and restored the tranquillity of her soul, increased her esteem and confidence. She discovered in him such an enlightened mind, such prudence and charity, qualities essential to a director, as she observed in no other person. He saw the state of her soul more clearly than she did herself; he obviated her difficulties; and his answers were so suited to her wants, that she entertained no doubt that God had designed her to be placed under the direction of the holy prelate. With this view, she begged him to hear her confession; he at first declined the task in order to try her; but afterwards he complied with her wishes. A profound peace, which she had never before experienced, followed this confession; at the same time, the desire which she felt to have him for her spiritual guide, proportionably increased. He gave her hopes, that one day that might take place, and told her to beg of God to manifest His divine will to both, and to wait with tranquillity. This great Saint was an enemy of eagerness; that disposition appeared to him to be of a suspicious nature. That was almost the only defect, which at that

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time she found in Madam de Chantal; she had so ardent an attachment to virtue, that it gave her no rest; she was always disquieted, always uneasy at her own performances, never in her own opinion doing enough, and always ready to embark in new undertakings for the glory of God and her own sanctification. The holy prelate did not approve of her disquietude; he knew that the spirit of God is not friendly to trouble; that He cherishes peace and tranquillity of heart; in a word, he considered the ardent eagerness of Madam de Chantal for doing good, as a desirable disposition to arrive at true sanctity, but as a disposition, which was to be removed, in order to reach that height.

Some days after the holy Bishop, taking leave of Madam de Chantal in order to return to his diocess, told her, that God seemed to design her to be placed under his direction, that he was every day more convinced of it, but that all precipitation was to be avoided, and that no human feelings were to be consulted in this affair. She some time after received the same assurance from a great servant of God, to whom she had communicated all that had passed between her and the holy prelate. In the mean time the troubles, which she experienced under the care of her first

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director, daily increased; he appeared to ~~conduct~~ her in the path of true sanctity; but his method was by no means suitable; it seemed that God required something of her, with which she was yet unacquainted; and her ardour in the prosecution of good, occasioned a degree of disquietude, which she was not able to moderate.

About this time the holy Bishop and his mother the Countess of Sales, were desirous of accomplishing a vow which they had made in honour of St. Claud, and Francis gave notice of it to Madam de Chantal, from whom he had heard, that she had contracted a similar obligation; he fixed the day, on which they were to arrive at the place. Madam de Chantal repaired thither at the same time. She imparted to the holy Bishop a full account of the state of her soul, and made to him a general confession. He removed her scruples concerning the vows which she had made by the order of her director; and to calm her disquietude, he gave her in his own hand-writing a plan of life, which he advised her to follow, till he should think proper to make an alteration. The reader, it is presumed, will not be displeased with the particulars of this method. Agreeably to this rule, Madam de Chantal rose at five in the morning, dressed herself without attendance and with-

• ~~out~~ fire during all seasons, and devoted an hour to mental prayer; an exercise, which the holy prelate recommends above all others. She afterwards called up her children, made them and her servants say their morning prayers, and conducted them to mass. In the afternoon, she read the Holy Scripture for a half an hour, heard the catechism, or gave short instructions to her children, to her servants, and to those from the neighbourhood, who were willing to attend. Before supper she made a spiritual retreat for a quarter of an hour, and said the rosary. She retired at nine, said her evening prayers, and made her examination with her children and servants, gave them all holy water and her blessing, and remained alone a half an hour in prayer. She concluded the day by reading the subject of her meditation for the morrow. The remaining portion of time, which has not been noticed, she employed either in labour, or in business, or in visiting the sick.

Agreeably to this method, she formed a pious habit of attending to the divine presence of God, and carried it to so great a length, that she saw God in every thing, and every object served to bring Him to her remembrance; at the same

time, this practice was conducted with so much sweetness and tranquillity, that it was not perceived, nor did it prevent her attention to business and conversation, nor disturb her presence of mind in any occurrence. What excited great admiration in a life, which exhibited such a finished model of virtue was, that she discovered no appearance of melancholy or constraint. Sweetness and liberty of mind prevailed in all the actions of Madam de Chantal; she was full of kindness and complaisance, of easy access, and ready to interrupt her exercises or to postpone them till another time, whenever charity or the wants of her neighbour called for her attention. Even her servants, a description of persons not extremely attentive to those concerns, when they witnessed her recollection supported by many ejaculatory prayers in the midst of a pressure of business, could not help remarking to each other: "Our mistress is praying at every hour of the day; she never loses sight of God, and yet no person is incommoded by her devotion." Great applause was bestowed on this account on the direction of the holy prelate; and the warmest enemies of devotion acknowledged, that so far from being hurtful to business, it produces the most happy effects, when it is under proper regulation.

After Madam de Chantal had thus adjusted the state of her conscience, she, agreeably to the plan assigned, proceeded to reform whatever might be too worldly in her person; she cut off her hair, which was exquisitely beautiful, and which she had worn in great quantity; she used only plain and coarse linen. She was extremely careful to mortify her taste, eating only of common food dressed in a plain manner, when she was alone; if company obliged her to provide any thing extraordinary or more delicately prepared, she would leave on the plate, without any affectation what she had taken, and order it to be given to some poor person that was indisposed. She fasted on Fridays and Saturdays, wore a hair shirt on the other days, and often used the discipline. By the practice of a holy life, she acquired such an ascendant over her passions, as raised her above inquietude. It has been remarked, that she possessed a natural vivacity and eagerness, and that she was easily discomposed. All these defects she dropped under the direction of the holy prelate. His object was to bring the heart under proper regulation; by that he began, fully satisfied that every thing else would follow in its natural course. Accordingly nothing could exhibit greater mildness than his conduct; he required very few exterior practices; but when

once a taste for devotion was excited, and he found a heart divested of the love of external objects and of itself, he then by a conduct marked with prudence and circumspection raised it to the highest degree of sanctity. Such was his treatment of Madam de Chantal. This great prelate, formed by the model of St. Paul, who, to use his own expressions, gave milk to the weak, and solid food to the perfect, did not at first permit the holy widow to follow the suggestions of her zeal; he did not overpower her with practices; he spared her strength; he accustomed her gradually to the exercise of the greatest virtues. It is true that she advanced much in a short time. But this is not given to every one; and for this purpose it becomes necessary to correspond with the measure of grace, which is bestowed.

Agreeably to this method of Madam de Chantal, Sundays and Festivals, were, as much as possible, so employed as to admit no foreign cares, not even the mention of temporal concerns: these were days completely devoted to God and to charity for her neighbour. When the divine service was over, she paid her visits to the poor, she consoled them, she condescended to make their beds, attended to their domestic concerns, and never suffered them to want nourishment,

remedies, or spiritual succours. She always had in her house some poor persons covered with ulcers; she often dressed them on her knees, always with respect; the faith with which she was animated, discovered to her Jesus Christ present in their persons; she attended them, when their last hour was approaching, assisted them till they expired, and buried them herself, with a share of courage, that filled those with astonishment, who were not like her animated with perfect charity. Such was the life of Madam de Chantal in the midst of the world at the age of thirty-two. It was by the practice of such distinguished virtues, that God prepared her to become one day the mother of so many holy daughters, who even at the present period consider her as their foundress and their model. But it is apparent, that God designed, by a life so holy, formed by the counsels and the example of the Bishop of Geneva, to confound by anticipation all those, who were one day to bring a charge of relaxation against his doctrine and his conduct, and to impute to him a degree of condescension ill suited to the severity of the Church.

In the year one thousand six hundred and six, when she was at Bourbilly, one of her manors, the number of persons there afflicted with illness

was so considerable, that her charity, active as it was, could scarcely devise means to supply their wants. She assisted them with her property, her personal attendance, her prayers and her instructions. She often buried four in the day, never disheartened by the extreme danger, to which she was exposed. But at length unable to resist the multiplied fatigues, which she underwent during the space of two months, she was seized with a dysentery, which brought her life into imminent danger. During this painful extremity, she afforded a striking example of meekness and of invincible patience, never complaining but of the pain which she gave, and of the danger to which her attendants were exposed. Though in the flower of her years, she regretted not life; the situation of her children in their minority, who stood in need of the care of a mother so virtuous, so skilful and so affectionate, excited a certain lively sensation. But her submission to the orders of Providence did not allow her to betray the smallest disquietude even on that tender subject; she believed that God would supply every deficiency; and in this submission to His Providence she waited the approach of death with a degree of tranquillity, which a heart pure and full of confidence usually inspires. But her hour was not yet come, and God reserved her for

the great work of the foundation of the Order of the Visitation, which she was to begin in conjunction with the holy Bishop of Geneva, and to support by her solitary efforts after his death. Against all appearance she recovered her health, resumed her exercises as soon as her situation would allow, and continued to attend on the sick with as much assiduity, as if her charity had not endangered her life. But why should not the love of God give birth to actions of such a generous description as those, which are daily achieved from a love of glory by so many brave men, who are ever ready to meet danger, at the expence of their personal safety?

Some time after, she received a letter from the holy prelate, who informed her, that he judged it necessary for her to proceed to Annecy. To understand the motive of this injunction, the reader is to be informed, that when she performed the pilgrimage, already recorded, to St. Claud, she formed a close intimacy with the Countess of Sales, the mother of the holy prelate, and that she had made a promise to that lady to pay a visit to the castle of Sales. She had acquitted herself of that engagement the year after it was made, and during the conversations, which she then held with the holy prelate, he had informed her, that he had in contemplation

a great work, in which God would employ her attention. She naturally enquired what this business was; but the holy Bishop replied, that he wished to consider the execution of it at his leisure, and that he could not satisfy her enquiry concerning it before a year had elapsed; that in the mean time he begged her to unite her prayers with his own, and earnestly to recommend the affair to God. It was for the purpose of communicating this business to her, that he requested her attendance at Annecy. On her arrival the holy prelate informed her, that he had fully considered before God, the proposal, which she had so often repeated to him of leaving the world in order to embrace a religious state; that he had found great difficulties in such a plan; but that at length the time was come to give her a final answer. On that subject in order to try her submission, he proposed to her to become a Nun of St. Clare, then a sister of the hospital of Beaune, and at length a Carmelite. The holy widow consented to each proposition with as much docility, as if she had never possessed a will of her own, or as if the proposed engagements had not been irrevocable. Then the holy Bishop charmed with her submission, communicated to her the project, which he had formed of establishing the Order of the Visitation, which they afterwards

founded.* She acknowledged after this scene, that an unexpected joy beamed in her soul on hearing the proposal, and that she experienced a Divine attraction of so powerful a nature for this holy enterprise, that she entertained no doubt of the will of God on the subject, and of His copious benediction on their joint labours.

However as she possessed an excellent understanding, great sense and considerable skill in business, she foresaw great difficulties in the enterprise; difficulties which were really experienced. For independently of the unavoidable contradictions, to which new establishments are usually exposed, and of the suspicious aspect, which is ascribed to that which is unauthorised by custom and the common usage of mankind, what obstacles were not to be discovered on the side of Madam de Chantal herself? An only son, a youth of fair hopes, who stood in need of her care; three young daughters, to whom she was equally necessary; affairs in a very intricate and embarrassed situation, with which she was solely acquainted; a father and a father-in-law in the decline of life, whom common decency did not permit her to abandon, all these circum-

* Maupas life of the Mother de Chantal.

stances formed sufficient hindrances to prevent her from raising an establishment out of the kingdom. Besides how was this establishment to be founded? Where were the means, the resources? A Bishop in such a state of poverty, as scarcely to have a subsistence, the friend of the poor, and obliged by his situation to bestow great charities; a young widow, rich indeed, but on whose fortune, a resolution had been adopted not to depend; all this according to the calculations of human prudence, presented no encouragement to such an enterprise. Accordingly the holy prelate, who had calculated the difficulties, could not refrain from saying: "In all this I see a great chaos; but Divine Providence, before which the wisdom of men is but folly, will know how to remove it in due time." Indeed how can we view the splendor exhibited at this period by the Order of the Visitation both in and out of the kingdom; so many houses well established and formed, so many churches provided with every ornament, which tends to give a strong impression of the Majesty of God, who is there served with suitable dignity; how can we contemplate this immense number of holy daughters, that charity, that Christian simplicity, that disengagement which prevails among them, that exactness of discipline, that love of retirement, that interior

and primitive spirit, which they have so religiously imbibed ; finally how can we survey such bright examples of virtue, with which the whole Church is edified, without observing the hand of God, which formed, which now sustains and preserves this religious Order. If to all this we add the contradictions, the cross and untoward accidents, which it had to encounter in its origin, we shall be constrained to acknowledge that much prudence, zeal and courage were necessary to support so great a design, or rather that something more than human presided at its birth and its progress.

During the stay of Madam de Chantal at Annecy, the Countess of Sales, enchanted with the character of her guest, formed a plan of a closer union between the families, and employed the holy prelate to propose to her a marriage between her eldest daughter and the Baron of Thorens. The holy widow was much embarrassed with this proposal ; on one side she approved the plan, and thought it honourable to her family ; but on the other side, she foresaw great obstacles on the part of the grand-fathers of her daughter, and she was persuaded that they would never consent, that their grand-daughter should be married out of the kingdom. She however

listened to the proposition with great demonstrations of joy and gratitude, promised her utmost endeavours to forward the design, and on her side requested the Countess of Sales and the holy prelate, to be permitted to take with her to Montelon the youngest of his sisters, to finish her education. They both gave their consent to her request; but the young lady died on her arrival at that place, in the manner related in the fifth book of this history. Madam de Chantal availed herself of this opportunity to propose to her father the marriage of her daughter with the Baron of Thorens; he raised the difficulties, which she had foreseen. But the holy widow observed to him with much firmness, that after the loss which she had occasioned to the house of Sales, she considered it a duty to make some reparation by giving to that family one of her daughters. The President was satisfied with that reason, and gave his consent to the marriage with additional satisfaction, as it was an advantageous alliance, and he had a singular regard and veneration for the Bishop of Geneva. The relatives of the young lady by the father's side, induced by the consent of the President, approved the marriage. The holy widow gave immediate intelligence of the event to the prelate, who conducted the Baron of Thorens to visit the young bride;

she was at that time but eleven years old. The contract was made, and the marriage postponed till the following year.

The conclusion of this marriage gave occasion to a similar proposal, which was made to Madam de Chantal herself. A nobleman of Burgundy, who was very rich, regular in his conduct and handsome in person, and an intimate friend of the President Fremiot, solicited the hand of Madam de Chantal. The President and all the relatives of the holy widow, shewed great eagerness for the accomplishment of this object; and she was solicited with great warmth to consent, as a double connection which was planned between the children was likely to bring great property into the family. The temptation was violent; she had to contend with the feelings of her heart. She could not but be sensible of the merit of this nobleman, and of the advantages of his proposal to her family; but God, whom nothing resists, when He desires to be master of a heart, was in this instance preferred; and the promises, which she so often repeated to live for Him alone, maintained the ascendant. The nobleman retired; and the holy widow in order to seal with her blood the vow which she then renewed, of never listening to any similar proposition, had

the courage to imprint with her own hand, by the means of a heated iron, the name of Jesus upon her heart.* An extraordinary action, more worthy of admiration than of imitation, but which shews great courage, and a firm resolution to live only for God.

In order to avoid similar persecutions, and all temptation respecting matrimony, she now judged it to be a duty, to open her mind to the President her father, concerning the project, which she had formed in concert with the Bishop of Geneva, and the design which she cherished of leaving the world for ever. Some days after, being alone in his company, she told him, that since the death of her husband, she had constantly felt a strong interior attraction, to live only for God; that she was afraid of incurring guilt by resisting her vocation any longer; that her eldest daughter was married, the two others were receiving a religious education, that he had been kind enough to take charge of her son, and that she could not leave him in better hands; that thus there remained nothing to hinder her from obeying the call of God, who had solicited her for a length of time, but her parent's consent, which she now entreated him to grant. At this

* Maupas *ibid.*

proposal the good old man was startled and deeply affected; in this situation he wept bitterly, then embracing her tenderly, he said: "and what! my dear daughter, do you value as nothing a father like myself, who always loved you with such tenderness? ah! let me descend to the grave before you abandon me, and then act agreeably to your inclinations." The vehemence of his grief impeded his utterance; and he remained in that state of distress, which would have roused the feelings of a heart less tender than that of Madam de Chantal. She did not expect so violent an assault; she was extremely affected, but she remained unshaken in her purpose. However not to leave her father destitute of consolation, she told him that her proposal was but a plain detail, which she judged it necessary to confide to so good a father, that nothing was yet concluded, and that she would never dispose of herself without his consent. The President eagerly caught this expression, and made her promise that she would come to no determination, without consulting the Bishop of Geneva, and on his side he engaged to adhere to his decision.

Madam de Chantal believed that she had obtained her end by this promise of her father; for she had no doubt that the Bishop, with whom

she acted in concert, would declare in her favour, and that she should be finally favoured with the consent of her father, which she despaired of obtaining by her own solicitations. But on this occasion she had to combat her own feelings; when she was left to her own thoughts, the firmness, which she had displayed, deserted her; she began to imagine that there was a degree of inhumanity, and consequently but an appearance of piety in the design which she had formed of leaving her father and her children. Nature loudly reproached her conduct; reason supported the sentiments of nature; faith seemed to approve those feelings, and the enemy of our salvation, who knows how to take advantage of our weaknesses, was busily engaged. Hence arose in her soul a violent tempest, which converted her purpose into irresolution; this irresolution was changed into an opposite design. Astonished that she could so easily dissolve those bonds, which God had formed, she at one time condemned her resolution, and at another reproached herself with having altered her purpose. She was in this wavering state of mind, when her brother the Archbishop of Bourges, informed by the President of the intention of his sister, arrived at Dijon. They united their solicitations, and made a formidable effort on a mind already shaken.

The Archbishop, who possessed in the family all the weight, which his episcopal character, supported by considerable merit, gave him, loudly condemned the resolution of his sister. He contended that there was more merit in living well in that state, in which God has placed us, than in following, under a specious appearance of piety, a capricious temper, and the dictates of a mind, full of disquietude and illusion, by which we are led to seclusion. He overwhelmed her with reasons and authorities; and he finally laboured to establish this conclusion, that if she were determined to execute her purpose, she was indispensably obliged to wait, till her children were settled, and till she had paid the last filial duties to her aged father, who at his advanced period of life, could not be supposed to dispense with her attention.

It is thus that the most holy enterprises are often blamed and opposed by persons of the most enlightened piety and with the best intentions; and indeed to view it as a general question, and to form a judgment by ordinary appearances, the resolution of Madam de Chantal was not calculated to ensure general approbation. We must view objects with the eyes of the Saints, and possess their feelings, in order to form a correct

judgment of their conduct; and perhaps at this period, the design of Madam de Chantal would be censured, if the eminent sanctity, which she attained in executing her purpose, had not justified the attempt. However, notwithstanding the irresolution of the holy widow, and the deference which she had for the authority of the President, and the enlightened mind of the Archbishop, she refused to abandon her design, and referred the whole business to the decision of the Bishop of Geneva. He arrived some time after with the Baron of Thorens, who had completed a marriage with the daughter of Madam de Chantal.

The day after the marriage, Madam de Chantal, who by conferring with the holy prelate, felt herself confirmed in her purpose, entreated the President her father, and the Archbishop, to have an interview with him. They all three met on that business. An hour after Madam de Chantal was called in. In no part of her life did she ever discover more discretion and firmness; she gave an account of her design and of her conduct; she shewed in clear terms the excellent order, which she had established in her family, leaving her children without debts or any legal incumbrance; she proved it to be a just and rational plan, that after having lived so long for them,

she should now be allowed to live for God alone, and for her own welfare, and that such an indulgence could with no propriety be denied her, as the situation which she was going to embrace, would not prevent her from inspecting their conduct, not even from superintending their affairs, if her presence should be wanted. The holy prelate observed, that her attention would with more facility be given to that object, as inclosure would not be observed in his new institute; that those who should embrace it, would enjoy the liberty of going abroad for the purpose of visiting the sick, and of assisting their neighbours on all occasions, when their charity might be usefully exerted; that Madam de Chantal by her engagement, would not be released from the care of her children; that this object was an indispensable duty, for the performance of which she would be answerable to God, and that no one could grant her a discharge from so imperious an office; that she might educate her youngest daughter with her, and that he would always consent, that she should perform all necessary journies, which the affairs of her children and their establishment might appear to demand. This representation softened the minds of the President and the Archbishop, and the holy prelate completed the business of obtaining their consent, by assuring them,

that this determination of Madam de Chantal had not been rashly or hastily taken; that he had himself examined the affair with all the attention to which it was entitled; that the more he had considered it, the greater marks had he discovered of a Divine vocation; that he should be afraid of acting in opposition to the will of God, if he were to attempt to divert her from her purpose; that he entreated them to reflect, that all opposition to His designs would be vain, and that they should deem themselves happy in promoting their execution. Finally the holy prelate represented the business in so many different points of view, that he succeeded in gaining the consent of the President and of the Archbishop.

This difficulty thus removed, there occurred another, which consisted in determining, in what situation they were to place the first house of the Order, in which Madam de Chantal was to fix her residence. The President contended strongly for Dijon, in order to have his daughter near him; the Archbishop with considerable earnestness proposed Autun, that she might with more facility consult the good of her children. But the holy widow maintained that Annecy was the most proper situation. For this choice she alleged two reasons; the first was, that in the

infancy of a new institute, recourse must frequently be had to the enlightened mind of the founder for advice; the other, that being so near to the castle of Thorens, she might be of more service to her newly married daughter; that she might often see her, adjust the order of her affairs, and direct her household. In these reasons she was supported by the holy prelate; the Archbishop thought them plausible, and the President at length yielded to their force, saying with a deep sigh: "I see that the sacrifice must be complete; it will cost me my life; but good God! it is not for me to resist thy Divine will."

The holy Bishop having thus adjusted these concerns, took his departure for his diocese, and Madam de Chantal accompanied him to Montelon, one of her manors. During his stay there, the holy widow desired him one Sunday to make an exhortation to the inhabitants; he complied with her request, and performed the work so effectually, that he converted a young man of irregular life, who afterwards became a Capuchin, and died in that order, after having given the most edifying example of virtue. Before he left Montelon, Miss de Brechard, of a good family in Nivernois, who resided in the immediate neighbourhood, paid a visit to the holy prelate, made

her confession to him, and consulted him on the design, which she had long formed, of becoming a Nun. The holy prelate embraced the opportunity of asking her if she was disposed to follow the fortune of Madam de Chantal, and to become one of her companions. She received the proposal with great joy; and the holy prelate promised her a place in his new establishment. At the same time Miss Favre, daughter of the first President of Savoy, received a secret inspiration at a ball to leave the world; on the return of the holy prelate, she placed herself under his direction, and opened to him the proposal; he approved her design, and left her at full liberty to be associated in the institute with Madam de Chantal. Another young lady from Savoy, of the name of Chatel, who was at that time in Germany, was favoured with an interior attraction from God, and adopted a resolution on her return to place herself under the direction of the holy prelate; she accomplished her purpose, and was judged worthy of assisting Madam de Chantal in founding the New Order of the Visitation. Miss Fichet du Fossigni, was likewise called in an extraordinary manner, and was the fourth, whom God associated with Madam de Chantal. Miss de Blonay, born in Chablais, was the fifth associate; for her the holy prelate shewed a peculiar

esteem; she succeeded Madam de Chantal in the government of the first convent of Annecy.

While God was thus preparing the persons chosen to execute His designs, the time agreed on for the departure of Madam de Chantal approached. Every thing was ready for her journey, when the President her father declared, that he could not yet induce himself to part with her, and begged, that she would postpone her departure, till the Easter of the following year. She gratified his wishes, thinking that she could not refuse that consolation to an aged father, who wanted that time to fortify his mind against so melancholy a separation. At the appointed period, the Baron of Thorens arrived to take his wife, and to conduct his mother-in-law to Annecy. Nothing now remained to retard the departure of the holy widow, but the payment of a considerable sum of money due to her late husband; but as the debt was contested, she preferred the expedient of transferring the amount from her own property to the account of her children, rather than the mode of litigation which would have delayed her departure. This generous conduct proved to her a serious inconvenience; and so little of her property remained, that her personal means did not greatly contribute to the establishment of the

Order, of which she was to be the mother. Such disinterestedness reflected peculiar credit both on her and her holy director, as mankind so rarely forget themselves in such pressing emergencies. But the Order of the Visitation was to be founded on a spirit of disinterestedness, of perfect abandonment to Providence; and besides the holy prelate did not approve of those establishments, which are made at the expence of families, and of the legitimate heirs. He made it a principle to keep his hands clean; and highly disapproved that interested conduct in directing souls, which disgraces the director and those under his care, which wounds religion in a tender part, and brings discredit on devotion.

All obstacles being now removed, and the time of her departure come, she waited on the Baron de Chantal, her father-in-law, to take leave. Notwithstanding the bad treatment she had received from him, she cast herself at his feet, asked his pardon if she had ever displeased him, begged his blessing, and recommended her son to his care. This good old man at the advanced age of eighty-six, who felt himself culpable in many parts of his conduct towards her, admired her virtue, appeared inconsolable, embraced her with tenderness, and wished her all the happiness

to which she was entitled. In all his dependencies there was exhibited a real scene of desolation; all persons imagined that in her they had lost a mother, a support, a resource in all their wants. The poor in particular, considering their loss as irreparable, testified their affliction by their tears, their cries, and every expression of heartfelt sorrow. She bid them the last farewell, made to them a short and pathetic exhortation, embraced them, recommended herself to their prayers, and departed for Autun, taking with her the Baron of Thorens and his lady, her daughter, Miss de Brechard, and her young son of the age of fourteen. Her third daughter was lately dead.

Madam de Chantal on her arrival at Dijon, thought it a duty to fortify herself with the bread of the strong, against the assaults, which she was about to encounter from tenderness and compassion, in leaving whatever was most dear to her heart. She was not one of those unfeeling characters, that have stifled the sentiments of nature, or have never experienced them; she knew that grace, without condemning such impressions, brings them under proper restraint. She was a daughter, and a mother; she felt for a father, who had ever loved her with peculiar tenderness, whatever the liveliest sense of gratitude can in-

spire. She had for her children all that affection, of which the tender heart of a good mother is susceptible ; they were entitled to her regard ; their personal accomplishments were striking, they were well-bred, they had been brought up under her eyes ; she had carefully formed them to habits of virtue. Such bonds of union are not broken without extreme violence ; nature testifies a repugnance, the finest feelings of the human heart are roused. How painful are such occurrences, how difficult are such sacrifices in the design, how severe in the execution !

The first object which presented itself to her view on entering the house of the President, her father, was her only son, who bathed in tears threw himself about her neck ; he held her some time in that attitude, while his words and actions contributed to excite the most tender emotions. This virtuous mother received his caresses with her usual feeling ; she however possessed strength of mind to console him, she dried up his tears, herself prepared to shew marks of sensibility. Overpowered as she was, she still had courage to proceed and take leave of her father. Her son redoubled his efforts to detain her ; and not being able to succeed, he threw himself across the threshold of the door, by which she had to pass.

“ My dear mother,” exclaimed he, “ I am too weak to stop you; but at least shall it be said, that you have stepped over the body of your son, in order to abandon him ” A spectacle so moving restrained her steps; the tears, which she had hitherto checked, now flowed in abundance; but the superior force of grace gained the ascendant over the feelings of nature. She passed over the body of her dear son, and pressed on to throw herself at the feet of her father, whom she entreated to bless her, and to take care of her son, whom she left. Whatever time the President had spent in preparing for this melancholy separation, he was yet unequal to the pressure of the emergency; he received his daughter with tears in his eyes, and such a degree of heart-rending grief, as endangered his life. He embraced his daughter, and raising to heaven his eyes streaming with tears, he exclaimed: “ O my God! what a sacrifice do you demand! But it is your will; I therefore offer to you this dear child; receive and comfort an aged parent.” He afterwards gave her his blessing; raised her up and embraced her, but he had not strength to attend her to the door. She left his apartment alone, and found a great company in attendance of relatives, friends, domestics, all melted in tears. This was another trial to encounter; but she supported it with such

firmness, that recollecting she had been observed to shed tears, and fearing that her sensibility might be ascribed to a wrong motive, she turned to her company, and said with a serene voice: "You must pardon my weakness; I leave an aged parent and my son for ever; but I shall find God in all places." She then departed, and arrived safe at Annecy, accompanied by the holy Bishop and the most considerable persons of the city, who attended her from respect, for the space of two leagues. She spent several days in conferences with her holy director, concerning the means of speedily carrying their enterprise into execution; after this she conducted Madam de Thorens to her husband, and remained with her as long as it was judged necessary to instruct her in the art of managing her domestic concerns.

As soon as Madam de Chantal was returned to Annecy, Miss Favre and Miss de Brechard, who had repaired thither, paid her a visit, and begged to be received as her first daughters. She complied with their request on the testimony of the holy prelate, who had already given them his approbation. Every thing was now ready for the festival of Pentecost, at which time the establishment was to commence, when an unforeseen accident retarded their operations. A lady, who had

engaged her word to the holy prelate to join the company, and who had contracted for the house in which they were to fix their abode, altered her purpose; she was dismayed with the greatness of the enterprise, which she now considered above her strength. She listened to the suggestions of human prudence, which in this concern had been so little consulted; confidence in God and a complete abandonment to His Providence, were not exactly congenial to her feelings. It was unquestionably a mark of the Divine protection, that this lady receded from her engagements; the inconstancy of her mind would have excited embarrassment; in the infancy of such an institute, pure and courageous souls only were to be selected; souls capable of encountering the contradictions of men, divested of worldly and interested views, and ready to embark in any enterprise for the Glory of God. Madam de Chantal furnished a very different example of disinterestedness on this trying occasion. Though she had not yet made a vow of poverty, which in the beginning of the institute was not in the immediate contemplation of the founder, she thought it a duty in laying the foundation of such a work, to afford to her neighbour a fresh example of disinterested conduct, and to her religious daughters a perfect model of disengagement from the world.

She consulted the holy prelate on the subject ; and as disinterestedness was a very striking trait in his character, he at the time that he was destitute of resources for his new design, approved her plan of stripping herself of all her effects and even of her jointure in favour of her children, and of contenting herself with a pension, which her brother the Archbishop of Bourges, engaged to pay. This action was received with as much censure as applause. The advocates of piety admired the disinterestedness of Madam de Chantal ; but the votaries of the world, who fondly censure what they have not courage to undertake, talked loudly of the imprudence of forming a religious establishment without resources. The holy prelate acknowledged, that in a human view of the subject, the work was of this description ; but he never designed to raise the fabric of the Order of the Visitation on the basis of human prudence. Success justified his conduct ; and fully demonstrated, that God superintends the concerns of those, who rely implicitly on His Providence ; and that even in this world, He sometimes bestows wealth on those, who have left all things to follow Him.

In the mean time as difficulties served rather to rouse the activity than to depress the spirits of the

holy prelate, when the glory of God was concerned, he completed the contract made by the lady with respect to the house of which we have spoken; he there provided a chapel and regular offices necessary to a community, and made all previous arrangements to perform the ceremony of the foundation on the festival of the Holy Trinity. On the eve of that day, which had been so much the object of the longing desires of Madam de Chantal and her companions, the holy widow experienced so violent a temptation to abandon her design, that she was in imminent danger of yielding to the suggestion. The bitter grief of her father and of her father-in-law, of her son, of her relatives, and of so many other persons who stood in need of her assistance, and to whom she was now to become useless, presented itself to her mind, and roused all the feelings of her heart. Even her conscience inflicted a sting, and reproached her with extreme inhumanity, and with a conduct odious to God and man, in having abandoned a father on the verge of life, and her young children, who so much called for her maternal services. All that had been alleged by the Archbishop to divert her from her design, now appeared incontestable; and she thought she read her own condemnation in that passage of the Holy Scripture, which treats those as infidels,

who abandon their family and their children. During the three hours that this violent temptation lasted, a situation more easily conceived than described, she could imagine no ground, which could justify the engagement she was about to form. In this overwhelming distress of mind she applied to God, represented to Him, that she had taken no step but with a view to please Him, and totally to belong to Him, that this was her sole motive; that this was perfectly well known to Him, who saw the inmost recesses of the soul. She then begged Him to enlighten her mind, not to permit her to be deceived in an affair of this moment, and not to reject an innocent soul that sought Him alone, and threw herself into His arms. The Father of mercies, the God of all consolation heard her prayer; and diffused over her soul such a portion of light, of consolation and joy, that she entertained no farther doubt that her intended sacrifice was acceptable. It is thus that the greatest Saints are subjected to trial, and that God sometimes permits, as in the instance of Job, the enemy of our salvation to make such efforts, as would prove irresistible, were our weakness to remain unsupported with grace from above. Our inborn pride is not easily subdued without such trials; and we should never be sufficiently convinced, how much the

work of our salvation depends on God, if our experience did not daily inform us, that being next to nothing in the order of nature, we are still less in that of grace. But it is thus that an humble and faithful prayer is never rejected, and that the succour of heaven is never denied to those, who ask for it with a contrite and humble heart.

* It was therefore on the sixth of June, in the year one thousand six hundred and ten, on the festivals of the Blessed Trinity and of St. Claud, which that year occurred on the same day, that Madam de Chantal, Miss Favre and Miss de Brechard, under the direction of St. Francis of Sales, began the establishment of the Order of the Visitation; a new institute, but useful in the extreme to the public, in consequence of the practice of receiving widows and infirm persons, of the little regard, which is there paid to riches and birth, and of the sole consideration which is there shewn to virtue and a vocation from God. The holy Bishop, after hearing their confessions and administering the holy communion, gave them rules full of discretion and mildness, which he had drawn up for the purpose, and addressed to them an exhortation on the fidelity with which

* Maupas. Part II.

they were to reduce them to practice. He spoke in terms of commendation on the contempt which they had shewn for the world, and on the happiness which they were going to enjoy in belonging entirely to God, and promised them peace of heart, that peace, which God alone can give. As he believed it more advantageous to the public to give them the liberty of going abroad for the service of the sick, than to shut them up, he enjoined enclosure only during the year of their noviciate. He required no alteration in the form of the dress, which they had worn in the world, contenting himself with ordering, that it should be black, and that the rules of the strictest modesty should be observed in that article. He introduced but few corporal austerities; his design, which was to provide a receptacle for the infirm and persons of delicate frames, did not admit of great rigours. But to compensate for the mildness of the institute, he prescribed a life so interior, so detached from worldly views, and so rigorously uniform; he subjected them to a discipline so nicely exact; he found occupation for all their time of so holy a nature; he gave so much to the spirit and so little to the body, that even at this period many persons consider their mode of life, as more replete with mortification, than orders of a more austere nature.

In the mean time the sweetness and sanctity of their manners, the Christian simplicity, the perfect charity which reigned among them, in a short time attracted to a kind of life so rational and perfect, a great number of holy daughters, who possessed of the courage to relinquish the world, had not strength to undergo great corporal austerities. Madam de Chantal during the single year of her noviciate, received not less than ten persons; a considerable number for a rising institute, which had scarcely assumed a regular form. The holy prelate never ceased to bless God for the progress of his work, and to draw upon it new favours, by his daily efforts to bring it to perfection. The contradictions and untoward accidents, which he experienced in the beginning, never depressed his hopes; and in the midst of the most trying difficulties which occurred, he was often heard to say: "I have a confident hope that the God of our fathers will multiply our daughters as the stars of heaven and the sands of the sea." It may safely be pronounced, that his hopes were not disappointed;* for some years have now elapsed, since one hundred and fifty houses of the Order of the Visitation existed,

* This was written in the year 1699.

containing more than six thousand six hundred religious women.

The period of Madam de Chantal's profession being now arrived, she wrote to the holy prelate, who was at that time at the Castle of Sales ; expressing to him the holy impatience, which she felt to complete her sacrifice, and to give herself irrevocably to God ; her language was full of fervour and feeling, and the historian of her actions, judges it an indispensable duty to preserve the expression of her letter. * “ When will that happy day approach, my Lord, on which I am to make an irrevocable offering of myself to my God? His goodness has filled me with so uncommon and so ardent a feeling of the happy grace of belonging to Him, that if the vehemence of this desire continues, it will overpower my existence. But what am I saying? I am depreciating the excellence of the Divine gift by the weakness of my expressions. O how painful is it to an ardent love to perceive this barrier between ourselves and the object of our wishes! All the world would die of love towards this amiable-God, if I could give an adequate description of the sweetness to be found in loving Him.” From these sentiments of

* Abridgement of her life. Maupas. Part II.

Madam de Chantal yet in her noviciate, an estimate may be formed of the height of perfection, which she afterwards attained, and of the happiness to be found in loving God, and in exclusively pursuing His interests. Accordingly the holy prelate was so affected with this letter, that he left his pursuits to proceed in order to examine her and her two companions, and admitted them to their profession.

In a very short time after, the President Fremiot, the father of Madam de Chantal, died at Dijon. The holy prelate, who in him lost one of his dearest friends, acquainted her with the melancholy event. She was afflicted with the liveliest sensations of sorrow, as she could not refrain from reproaching herself with having hastened the hand of death, by abandoning him in the decline of life. The situation in which her youthful son was placed by this event, a young man of promising hopes, whom she had left with her father, induced the holy prelate to think, that a journey to Burgundy was to her indispensable. She obeyed his injunctions and instantly departed, accompanied by the Mother Favre, and the Baron de Thorens, her son-in-law. During the four months that she was engaged in this journey, she adjusted the affairs of her family with a degree of

prudence, which excited general admiration, appointed a governor for her son, placed him in an academy, and then returned to Annecy. She immediately resumed her exercises of piety, and of charity towards her neighbour with redoubled fervour; besides the interior and domestic practices of the convent, she every day went herself, attended with one or two of her companions, to visit the sick, to solace and serve them with a degree of zeal, which could originate only in the most ardent charity. Nothing could damp her pious ardour, not the most disgusting and contagious illness, not the peevish and froward disposition of the sick, not the continual danger, to which she was exposed. Her pious attendants seconded her efforts with a share of zeal, which yielded only to that with which she was inflamed; and there subsisted among them a holy emulation in undertaking the meanest offices, and such as were the most laborious and the most repugnant to human nature. The Mother de Chantal, on all other occasions meek and humble, then assumed the character of a Superior; always ready to yield to others she never courted pre-eminence, but when sufferings and danger were to be encountered. The holy prelate, far from animating the vehemence of her zeal, was solely attentive to restrain it within due bounds; as she viewed

Jesus Christ in the persons of the poor, she thought that she never did enough for the alleviation of their distress.

So much bodily and mental exertion at length exhausted the strength of the Mother de Chantal; nature sunk under that pressure of fatigue, which would have overpowered the most robust constitution; she fell into a dangerous illness, and God permitted that this pious Order, which was designed as an asylum for the infirm, should be governed by a foundress, who, by her own experience, might learn to compassionate the infirmities of her daughters, and form them by her example to that tenderness and charity, so necessary for the alleviation of the sick. She suffered for a great length of time, disorders of so violent and so concealed a nature, that the remedies, far from assuaging her pain, served only to increase it. The holy prelate, who considered her as the support of his infant establishment, omitted no means to promote the restoration of her health. The most skilful physicians from all quarters were employed; but, instead of removing the disorder, they were scarcely acquainted with its cause. In this state of distress, when all human means had proved unavailing and had been discontinued, God, who wounds and who heals, who takes

away and who restores life, whenever He pleases, blessed her with returning health. Her state of convalescence was long; but she finally recovered her strength.

As soon as she was enabled to resume her employment, she formed the design of changing her house. The number of her daughters had increased to that degree, that the house furnished by the holy prelate, was become too small for their accommodation. Every circumstance appeared friendly to her design; the most important services which she and her companions performed for the public, naturally tended to conciliate favour. But it often happens by an appearance of fatality, for which it would be difficult to assign any adequate reason, that the most useful enterprises are crossed; God permits these events to shew us, that neither force, wisdom nor obstacles, can obstruct the execution of His designs. The holy prelate and the Mother de Chantal, experienced on this occasion, the opposition of the public and of individuals; even their Sovereign was hostile to their views; a general spirit of contradiction arose; and as he himself writes to one of his friends, they had to undergo cruel indignities. The patience and the prudence of the holy prelate, overcame these obstacles; and he had at length

the satisfaction to see the first Convent of the Visitation begun and completed at Annecy. The reputation of the daughters of the Visitation began at this period to be very generally diffused; the exalted opinion which was entertained of the sanctity and the enlightened spirit of the founder, of the foundress and of the daughters, formed by their tuition, induced several cities to request the honour of building houses for the accommodation of the Order. It was not possible so soon after their establishment to satisfy such reiterated demands; it would have been the direct method to ruin, or at least to weaken in the highest degree, the interior spirit of the institute, to have diffused it so rapidly before it had acquired sufficient strength. "Let us give from our abundance," said the holy prelate on this occasion, "but let us be careful not to exhaust the source by dividing it into so many rivulets, before it has been allowed time to fill."

In the mean time he was unable to resist the solicitations of the Cardinal de Marquemont, Archbishop of Lyons, a prelate of singular merit, and his intimate friend. That distinguished personage desired to have in that city a house of the Visitation; he wrote to the holy prelate on the subject, and supported his request with such earnestness, as induced him to consent to the pro-

posal. The Cardinal instantly dispatched a carriage with one of his Almoners, to conduct the Mother de Chantal to Lyons. She departed from Annecy the twenty-fifth day of January, in the year one thousand six hundred and fifteen, notwithstanding the severity of the season and the weakness of her health, accompanied by the Mothers Favre, de Chatel, and de Blonay; and arrived at Lyons, the first day of February, the eve of the purification. They alighted at the house which Madam d'Auxerre, the foundress, had prepared in Bellecourt, where this lady received them with joy proportioned to her ardour to entertain such guests. The Cardinal on the very day paid a visit to the Mother de Chantal; after affording her a thousand demonstrations of the esteem and consideration, which he had for her merit, he appointed an hour on the following day for performing in person the ceremony of their foundation, and he executed his intention with all possible solemnity. Madam d'Auxerre entered that same day on her noviciate. She was possessed of considerable property; but her relations displeased at her plan of retirement, ordered her effects to be seized, and affected to contest her claim to her own possessions. She had recourse to the protection of the Cardinal; but that resource did not remove the sufferings, which the establishment had to endure. The prudence of

the Mother de Chantal was of great assistance to her in this distressing situation; at length she restored peace, but it was not till she had borne every species of inconvenience, with such patience and meekness, as proved a source of great edification to the seven young novices, whom she had received. Nine months passed in this manner; at the end of which she appointed the Mother Favre the superior, and the Mother de Blonay assistant and mistress of the novices; after which she returned to Annecy.

Till this period, the Order of the Visitation had not assumed the regular form, by which it is at this time distinguished; simple vows only were made; the dress was not different from that worn in the world except for its extreme modesty; enclosure was not observed, the interior practices were not precisely what they now are, in a word, the Visitation did not bear the title of a religious order, but of a congregation. The Cardinal of Marquemont, though he held in the highest estimation, the founder and the foundress, was the first who thought that a change should be made in the original form of the institute. He was apprehensive that after their death, it might decline from its first fervour; that the liberty which the sisters had of going abroad, might lead to irregularity and disorder; and that simple vows did

not form a bond sufficiently strong to restrain the inconstancy of the human heart. On this interesting subject he wrote to the holy prelate and to the Mother de Chantal, and observed, that in order to establish their institute on a permanent basis, he judged it absolutely necessary to require enclosure, to oblige their daughters to make solemn vows; in a word he thought they should form their congregation into a religious order; and for that purpose he offered to employ his credit and his solicitations in negotiating the business with the Pope. Whatever deference the holy prelate invariably shewed to the opinions of other men, and in particular to those of the Cardinal, he could not immediately close with this proposition. The care of the sick, and of the distressed, the alleviation of the poor, the exterior works of charity appeared to him so essentially interwoven with the Order of the Visitation, that he thought it would be the means of perverting its spirit, to place his daughters under the inability of practising them, by requiring enclosure. To this purport he wrote to the Cardinal, and informed his Eminence in express terms, that in establishing the Order of the Visitation he had kept in view two forms of life of a very opposite cast, of which one was framed by the model of Martha, and which is devoted to objects of charity; and the

other, by the example of Magdaten, which is given to repose and contemplation ; that his design had been to unite them in proportions, so nicely adjusted, that without interfering with each other, they might afford a mutual support ; that his daughters in labouring for their own sanctification, might at the same time promote the comfort and salvation of their neighbours ; that it was apparent, that by insisting on enclosure, an essential part of the institute would be destroyed ; that thus his daughters would be confined to the contemplative life ; that their good example and their charitable endeavours, would be withdrawn from their neighbours ; and that they would themselves lose the opportunity of practising those works so much recommended in the Gospel ; that on these grounds he begged his Eminence to rest satisfied ; that affairs should remain in the present situation.

The Cardinal having received this answer, was of opinion, that he should forward the business more effectually by a personal interview, than by letter. With this design he repaired to Annecy ; there they held several conferences on the subject, at which the Mother de Chantal often assisted. At length the holy prelate yielded, and gave his full consent, that the congregation of the Visitation

should be formed into a religious order. In consequence of this resolution, the Cardinal deemed it expedient, that the holy prelate should make choice of one of the rules approved by the Church, and frame a code of constitutions, which the congregation of the Visitation should engage to follow with exactness, and which should subject every thing, even the minutest practices to rule; he undertook to obtain the approbation of the Holy See. As soon as the Cardinal had left Annecy, the holy prelate began to compile the constitutions of the Order. He selected the rule of St. Augustine, as the mildest and the best adapted to his purpose. Engaged afterwards in framing the particular constitutions of the new institute, he recommended the affair to God for a great length of time, and begged all the pious persons within the circle of his acquaintance to perform the same office. Notwithstanding his superior knowledge of the principles of an interior and religious life, he never chose to follow his own lights; he collected the constitutions of different orders with a view to appropriate to his own, whatever might best suit his purpose. But he principally formed his work by the model of the constitutions followed by the society of the Jesuits.*

* See the Note, p. 273. et seq. of the former volume.

He admired the plan and order of that memorable code; he was struck at the justness, the discretion, the exactness which marked those constitutions, as well as at the singular foresight, which enabled the holy founder, not to omit the least circumstance, calculated to promote piety in an Order, formed for such different employments, and always intent on promoting the salvation of their neighbour. Accordingly having read and examined with the maturest attention all these different constitutions, he framed his own, and began his general design, by charging the daughters of the Visitation, not only to labour in promoting their own sanctification, but that of all persons of the female sex, who were not admitted to other religious orders.

The reason which he assigns for this injunction is, that many women who often receive a Divine inspiration to aspire to a religious life, are unable to execute their intentions, either on account of advanced years, infirmities, or because the weakness and delicacy of their constitution prevents them from encountering the fasts, the abstinences and other austerities, which are practised in more rigorous orders. He observes that these persons, though deeply impressed with a contempt of the world, possessed of courage to relinquish it, and

well formed for an interior life, are in consequence obliged to live in the hurry and perturbation of external affairs, from an inability to find religious houses to receive them, and practices adapted to their peculiar circumstances; and that it was with this view that he established the Order of the Visitation. In consequence of this general design, he orders that widows as well as virgins, may be received, provided they be legitimately released from the care of children, if they should have any, that they have properly adjusted their affairs, and that there exist no ground of apprehension that they should be disturbed in their retirement. He directs that on this delicate subject, the advice of the Spiritual Father and of other discreet persons be taken, in order to obviate the complaints and murmurs of the votaries of the world, who are ever disposed to blame, what they have not courage to imitate. Agreeably to this principle, he consents to the admission of those, who from age, corporal infirmity, or any similar defects are restrained from entering other religious houses, provided these defects be compensated by a sound mind and a solid judgment, a good vocation, an ardent desire to belong to God, and a strong disposition to practice all their lives a profound humility, evangelical simplicity, obedience, meekness and all those Christian virtues, the exercise of

which is connected solely with the mind and the heart. To this general admission of the infirm he makes some exceptions, arising from the case of contagious disorders, such as the leprosy, and others which are epidemical; or in the event of such continual and dangerous infirmities, which debar the patient, whatever be the fervour of her desires, from practising in any manner the rule and other exercises prescribed in the constitutions. As to those, who should be afflicted with any of these disorders after their profession, the holy prelate requires that they be treated with constant attention; that every degree of kindness consistent with the rule should be shewn, and that charity undismayed with difficulties, or any untoward event, should be practised.

He likewise requires that aged and infirm persons be received with less difficulty, as the first design of the Visitation was to serve the poor and the sick; and that thus they should deem themselves happy in an opportunity of exercising within their own walls that charity, which their enclosure prevents them from displaying in public. But as it would be impracticable to accomplish this object, if the aged and the infirm only were admitted, the holy prelate moreover directs, that young persons of a healthy and robust

constitution should be received, in order that while some have the merit of patience, others may sanctify themselves by the exercise of charity. He adds that the houses of the Visitation, thus composed of the healthy and the infirm, will exhibit a perfect picture of the nuptial feast of the heavenly spouse; to which not only the robust and vigorous were invited, but the sick, the blind and the lame. In virtue of this precise ordinance thus laid down by the holy prelate, the widow, the aged and the infirm have never been excluded from the houses of the Order of the Visitation. In his **Holy Year*, he has preserved the lives of many Nuns, who having been admitted while labouring under many bodily infirmities, and even many great defects, there lived in a very exemplary manner, and made most edifying ends. He likewise wishes it to be clearly understood, that in the Order of the Visitation, the advantages of birth, of talents and of superior endowments, should possess no weight without true humility; and that to have any consideration in the institute, his daughters must necessarily be little in their own eyes, and be willing to forfeit all estimation in those of their neighbour; he desires that the preference be given to a poor girl, who is meek

* Printed at Annecy in 1609.

and humble, before the daughter of a King, that should be devoid of these qualities; and the reason which he assigns is, that a religious society derives from this latter description of persons, much credit or much disgrace, agreeably to the good or bad vocation of such members. To the present period the Order of the Visitation has received from this source the most distinguished splendor. We have there seen, and we continue to witness examples of Princesses and of ladies from the highest ranks of life, who are distinguished only by their meekness, their humility, their patience, and by the practice of every Christian and religious virtue; an infallible proof, that God ceases not to diffuse over this pious Order his heavenly graces and benedictions.

The holy prelate, having thus adjusted the object before him, began to devise the means necessary for its attainment. With this view he requires, that the houses of the Visitation should be endowed, and possess property in common, in order that on one hand they may have means of administering relief to the infirm, and on the other, that they may not be diverted from the practices of an interior life, by the cares arising from the want of the necessaries of life. But at the same time he requires that poverty be so rigidly ob-

served, that the sisters are not individually to possess any property, nor any claim to its use; for which reason he ordains, that every year they are to change their apartments, their beds, their crosses, their beads, their books, and in general all that relates to the different purposes of life. In one case the apartments are excepted, when the superior and the physician think it not adviseable solely from motives of health. With the exception of silver spoons, which are allowed for cleanliness, he absolutely forbids the use of plate, but for the service of the altar. To promote the same general design, he exempts the Nuns from corporal austerities, with the exception of those, which are permitted by the constitutions, and the number of these is inconsiderable; and he requires great attention on the part of the superiors not to suffer, from zeal uninfluenced by discretion, any change to be made in this particular. But at the same time, with respect to the exercises of piety, which depend solely on the mind and the heart, he carries matters to the highest degree of perfection. He dispenses the Nuns from the great office, and requires only the little office of our Lady to be recited. Many reasons, too long to be inserted in this place, are given for this indulgence. It is sufficient to observe that the Holy See has approved them by granting this

dispensation ; and that if this can be considered as a defect, it is amply compensated by the meditations, the pious lectures, the practices of recollection, and the retreats which are enjoined.

He then enjoins enclosure and the solemn vows ; and takes such effectual precautions to enforce their observance, as must ever excite admiration, in favour of his wisdom, prudence and piety. He regulates the exercises and the employment of time, even for the least observances, from an apprehension that under the pretext of omission or interpretation, novelties might be introduced. He declares every thing of this nature extremely suspicious, whether in points of doctrine or of practice, even from a view of higher perfection ; he demands that all innovation be perpetually banished from the Order ; that the superiors should be in the highest degree attentive to prevent its rise and progress, that singularities be studiously avoided, and that the attention of the sisters be confined to the constitutions and received usages. He regulates the dress, which was such as is worn by the Nuns at this time, the lodging and food, and every other article, which was to correspond with their exterior appearance, and with the rules of propriety and of religious poverty. Besides the regulations which have been mentioned, he

framed many others relating to the mode of adjusting their domestic concerns, of conducting their elections, of forming the novices, of examining the postulants, of imposing penances, of correcting faults, and others, the mention of which would be too minute for history. As to the interior of the Visitation, which is a spirit of piety, of charity, of simplicity and of meekness, the account of that may be postponed to the eighth book, in which we shall speak of the spirit, of the conduct and of the maxims of the holy prelate.

When all things were thus adjusted, there remained but one point for discussion, which was however, of extreme importance; for the question to be determined was, whether a head, a general, mother superior, for instance, or a superior general, should be chosen to govern the Order of the Visitation, or whether it was to be submitted to the government of the Bishops and Ordinaries of the different places, in which their houses should be situated. This business was for a considerable length of time a subject of serious deliberation; and the reasons on both sides were so forcible, that a decision was not soon formed. In favour of the first opinion it was alleged, that monasteries situated in so many different cities,

proviuces and kingdoms, would never be enabled to maintain between themselves a cordial and permanent union, without the interposition of a chief; that all political, ecclesiastical and religious bodies, had adopted no other expedient for the purpose of uniting the different members, of which they were composed; that monarchies were ruled by a King, republics by a Sovereign Magistrate, diocesses by a Bishop, all religious orders by a General, the Church by a Pope, who is the visible head, and the world by one God, who made all things, on whom all things depend, and to whose honour all things are to be directed; that all concerns in the natural, political and in the moral world, were subservient to unity; that till the present period no other method had been devised to unite objects independent of each other; that to subject to the Ordinaries of the different places the various houses of the Visitation, would be the direct way to form separate and distinct bodies, and that they would never compose a single body, unless they should be united under one head; that without that precaution, union would subsist so long as it should prove agreeable to the various houses, and that it would be difficult to maintain it for any length of time. It was farther urged, that no legislator had ever spoken in terms so precise, as to render all interpretation of his laws un-

necessary; that as it was not possible to foresee every case, there never had existed a body, that had not stood in need occasionally of new regulations, or a dispensation from ancient obligations; and it was asked, who would be competent to transact all this necessary business in an Order, of which the houses would be independent of each other, and which should acknowledge no single head. It was again urged that the good order and peace of the houses, regular discipline and motives of health, would frequently oblige the religious members to change their monasteries; that it would inevitably happen that one house would be destitute of a person proper to assume the reins of government, while others would abound in able members; and it was again asked, who would provide for these contingencies, and make that arrangement, without which an Order could not subsist long, since a Bishop did not possess the authority to send Nuns to monasteries beyond the limits of his jurisdiction, nor to draw from other houses such members as he might deem necessary. Finally it was asserted, that an Order to be governed well, should ever depend on a superior, who has learned the art of obedience, before he has ventured to assume the command; who is perfectly conversant with the spirit, the rules and the customs, and who has even reduced them to prac-

tice; and that this condition could never be realized in the persons of the Ordinaries of the different places, in which the houses of the Visitation might be situated.

The holy prelate, who was not of this opinion, replied on the other hand, that it was always possible without any apprehension of failure, to follow in these latter times, the model of the first ages of the Church; that during those periods, there never existed any description of religious persons, who were not dependant on the Bishops; that in particular the care of Christian Virgins had always been confided to them, and that their authority had always been found sufficient to remedy the inconveniences specified; that the members of the same religious body would ever maintain a sufficient share of union, as long as they should continue to be animated with the same spirit; that they would have the same laws, the same education, the same practices, the same ecclesiastical superiors, and they would always keep in view the same end; that the first Christians, who had but one heart and one soul, in whatever part of the globe Providence had placed them, were connected by no other bond of union; that charity, alone capable of uniting men by the firmest ties, might be preserved, without having re-

course to a chief; that mankind had never formed any establishments, which were not subject to some inconvenience, and that such an event could never happen; that an Order without a superior general, might have ties of connection sufficiently strong; but that religious communities governed by such superiors, were yet subject to inconveniences of equal magnitude; that if a chief should decline from the spirit of his state, and exhibit an example unworthy of his character, weakness and corruption would be soon infused into the members; that a single Bishop might in truth be deficient in vigilance and firmness in maintaining the spirit of the Order, but that it was not probable, that all other Bishops would be infected with a similar spirit of relaxation; that thus discipline might be vitiated in some quarters, but that it would subsist in full vigour in others; that finally if a strong bias to disorder and corruption exists in human nature, it will at least become a part of prudence to retard the evil and to remove it to the greatest distance. This last reason appeared decisive to the judgment of the holy prelate; and it was determined that the convents of the Visitation should be subject to the jurisdiction of the Ordinaries.

Success has clearly justified the sentiment of the holy prelate; the Order of the Visitation has sub-

isted for more than a century in this state of dependance on episcopal jurisdiction, and at the same time in so perfect a degree of union, as to prove a model to other orders; all their houses support each other in their spiritual and temporal wants; the abundance of some, furnishes aid to the indigence of others; all display an active concurrence in cherishing each other, and in aspiring to perfection. The religious members, that people these establishments, without the advantage of a personal acquaintance, without the pleasure of having ever met, still preserve a mutual esteem and affection. An animated, active and respectful charity reigns among them, and leaves no doubt that their holy founder, who governed them during life, still performs the same office in heaven. As to other considerations, though he has not prescribed an equal measure of austerities for all the members of the institute, his design was by no means to banish corporal rigours from his Order; on the contrary it was his intention that each one should reduce her body and her senses to that subjection mentioned by St. Paul, as far as considerations of health, their interior exercises and a regard for uniformity would admit. But for fear self-love should damp the fervour of zeal on one hand, or an indiscreet ardour on the other, should carry them beyond bounds, he requires that this

matter be wholly referred to the judgment of the superiors; who on their part are directed to take into their consideration at once the end of the institute, to which every practice must ever be subservient, as well as the bodily strength of individuals, in order that a due medium may be observed between relaxation, which injures the soul, and excessive rigour, which ruins the health.

The holy prelate having finally completed the constitutions of the Order of the Visitation, submitted them to the examination of persons of piety, skill and prudence. They met with very general approbation; and at the present period they are universally admired for wisdom, mildness, and that accurate foreknowledge of circumstances, which must necessarily be the effect of the most consummate experience. It was only observed to him, that by insisting on the admission of the infirm, he would finally convert his Order into an hospital. He replied, that he had always been the advocate of the infirm; that he had often seen persons labouring under bodily infirmities, who would have become excellent Nuns, if they could have found monasteries ready to receive them, and that he had in part founded his Order, to furnish a remedy for this inconvenience. The approbation of Rome soon followed the favourable opinion

which had been entertained of the new institute in France and Savoy. Paul V. who had the highest esteem for the holy prelate, confirmed it with the most significant terms of applause; he erected the congregation of the Visitation into a religious Order, under the rule of St. Augustine, and bestowed on it all the privileges, usually enjoyed by the other religious Orders.

This alteration in the institute of the Visitation, so far from retarding its progress, contributed to its increase. During the short period which the holy prelate survived, from its erection into a religious Order, he witnessed thirteen convents well established at Annecy, at Lyons, at Moulins, Grenoble, Bourges, Paris, Orleans, Dijon, and in many other of the principal cities of the kingdom. God continued to bestow His benediction after the death of the founder; and the Mother de Chantal, who co-operated with him in so holy and faithful a manner, and survived him only nineteen years, founded eighty-seven houses, if we include those already named. From that period the number of convents has been increased to one hundred and fifty; the Order which for many years was confined to France and Savoy, has been extended to Italy, to the kingdom of Naples, to Germany and to Poland. A progress so consi-

derable in so many various parts, should in the ordinary course of things have weakened the interior spirit of the Order; and it appeared scarcely possible to form in so short a time a sufficient number of daughters, to act as superiors, and to fill the different offices in so many convents. The same progress which we observe in the order of nature, may be discovered in the order of grace; effects are gradually and successively produced. Time is necessary to form the infant soul, to give it increase and strength; the use of milk, agreeably to the language of St. Paul, should precede that of solid food; and the age of perfection must be attained, before there appears a prospect of engendering souls to Christ. The Order of the Visitation, by a particular grace, seems to have been exempted from this law. We observe even from its foundation, an astonishing number of subjects capable of forming others, and almost as many superiors and foundresses as Nuns; an infallible proof of the excellence and sanctity of its laws, of the fidelity with which they were practised, of the superabundance of graces, with which God favoured it even at its first institution.

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While the Order of the Visitation was making these rapid advances, the holy prelate was not so

engrossed with the cares, which new establishments necessarily create, as not to bestow an increased attention on the whole of his episcopal functions ; whatever confidence he justly reposed in the zeal of the Bishop of Chalcedon, there were very few concerns, which he did not transact in person, or at least guide by his advice and direction. The nearer he approached to the end of his career, the more he was observed to redouble his exactness and his ardour ; and in proportion as the period approached when he was to give an account of his administration to the Sovereign pastor, the Bishop of our souls, his exactness and fidelity were improved, his application to all his duties, and to the practice of Christian and Apostolic virtues was enlarged. It was with a view to his approaching dissolution, of which God had given him an anticipated knowledge, that without changing his general plan of conduct, he redoubled his charities and his alms ; nothing was suffered to escape his care. He visited more frequently the hospitals, the prisons, the religious houses, the sick ; he had written accounts of their different wants ; he sent them proper remedies ; ordered necessary food to be prepared for them ; served them with his own hands ; and when he was obliged to be absent, either left them money, or gave such precise orders, as were suited to their

wants. He assisted in the same manner the poor priests of his diocese, and many gentlemen of decayed fortunes, whose children he educated, paid their pensions, and spared neither pains nor expense to give them a Christian education, and such as was conformable to their rank. Hospitality was always a favourite object of his attention; and when the rooms of his house, destined for the reception of guests were full, he hired apartments in the city, and borrowed considerable sums to meet this expense.

The modest poor shared no inconsiderable part of his charities. He was equally affected with their distress and the shame with which it was attended. This was ever his own immediate concern; he took it solely on himself, and always preserved an inviolable secrecy. He never could endure the conduct of those persons, who, to appear charitable, make innumerable useless enquiries, which serve only to expose the distress of their neighbour, and to cover him with confusion, without affording much relief. He could not refrain from censuring a conduct, by which the indigent are made to purchase very inconsiderable succour at so great a price. "To what purpose," would he exclaim, "are all those splendid enquiries, those pompous informations, but to mortify

those unfortunate sufferers, by publishing to the world their poverty and their shame? Why all this noise? these testimonies of their indigence? what views do they promote, but to attract a vain reputation of charity, to flatter a spirit of ostentation and pride, while these unfortunate beings are dying with confusion and grief?" "No, no!" continued he, "it is not enough to give alms; the work must be well done. When God alone is the motive of the work, He only should be the witness." It was with the same regard to secrecy, that he furnished a lady and her three daughters with a subsistence, till he had obtained a pension for them from the Duke of Savoy; and that he gave four hundred golden crowns, the amount of a present which he had received, to a young lady, who, from a want of fortune, was unable to execute her intention of embracing a religious life. In seasons of scarcity, it was his practice to purchase considerable provisions of grain, which he distributed at a reduced price to those, who were enabled to buy, or gave gratuitously to those, who were too poor to purchase their supply. His charity was extended even to his enemies; he was not satisfied with not hurting them; he performed for them every kind of good service. A gentleman, whom he knew to be his personal enemy, and who had omitted no means to blast

his reputation, by secret calumnies, was brought to ruin by an unfortunate business. The holy prelate anticipated any application, took him into his house, gave him his board for six weeks, and bestowed on him a considerable sum of money, which he had borrowed for the purpose, and thus re-established him in his former situation.

He extended his succour even to heretics in their wants; and this charity without limit, which glowed in his heart, never suffered him to see them in distress without offering them relief. For this he was sometimes kindly reproached, and told that he deprived himself by that conduct of the means of assisting poor Catholics. He replied, that God would provide for that emergency; that heretics, though plunged in error, were still men; that they were Christians, and composed a part of his flock, though they had strayed from the fold; and that the attention of a pastor should be directed to the infirm portion of his sheep, as well as to those that were sound. He added, that he who could gain the heart, gained every thing; that the relief which he had furnished to the Calvinists had rendered them attentive to his instructions, and that he had enjoyed the consolation of seeing many of them enter the pale of the Church by this gate. Those of Go-



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neva, dazzled with the splendor of his virtue, could not withhold their admiration; and they have been heard publicly to declare, that if all Bishops were like him, they should feel no reluctance in returning to the Catholic Church. This veneration on the part of heretics for a prelate so holy and so zealous, appeared at the time of his beatification. While the examination of his merit and general conduct was proceeding agreeably to established usage, a Calvinist presented himself to give testimony in his favour; but finding that his evidence was not admitted, he declared before the surrounding witnesses, that he had been acquainted for many years with the late Bishop of Geneva, and having taken great pains to investigate his conduct, he had never observed any trait in him, which was not worthy of an apostle.

It may perhaps appear a subject of surprise, that with so small an income, he was enabled to perform such extensive charities. It is undoubtedly true, that without some external aid, he never would have been able to answer these continual demands; but the high estimation in which his virtue was held, and the general conviction of his disinterested conduct, induced many in the extensive circle of his acquaintance, to send him considerable sums, for the employment of which

they placed implicit confidence in his zeal and his prudence; and this great man, so disengaged from the world, so inflexible in refusing any presents for his own use, so circumspect in avoiding the slightest suspicions, which would have dishonoured his ministry, became without hesitation, the depository of the effects of the poor; he made himself a receiver for them; and of every species of property confided to him for this honourable purpose, he made no other use than to undertake the care and the trouble of the distribution. But these resources, however abundant, frequent, and managed with all the economy which Christian prudence is capable of suggesting, were insufficient to answer the demands of charity so enlightened, so active and so incessantly attentive to the cry of distress. On those occasions he would not spare his furniture, his chapel, nor even his own dress. A remarkable instance of this nature happened at Annecy, when a stranger in extreme distress passed through the city; the holy prelate being without money, gave him the cruets from his chapel; the stranger greatly surprised declined the present; "take them," said the holy prelate with a smiling countenance, "to what better use can I apply them." Having heard that in a parish church the Divine Service could not be performed from a want of ornaments, he sold two

silver candlesticks from his own chapel to supply money in this exigence; and when he was told that he would want them himself, he said: "My difficulties will never be equal to the want under consideration." As to his dress, he was not satisfied with giving his clothes from his wardrobe, he often stripped himself of what he wore, when he was without money, and found no other means of assisting the poor. These charities which were directed to remove corporal distress, were supported by an unremitting attention to the care of souls; the visitation of the poor, of the sick and of the imprisoned, formed his leading occupation. Towards the end of his life, when the weakness of his health prevented him from giving his attention to preaching, which he considered as an indispensable duty of Bishops, he often heard the catechism in public, and more frequently in his episcopal palace, where he was seen amidst a crowd of children, whom he was instructing and forming to virtue.

About this time he met with an adventure of so singular a nature, that it deserves to be recorded. He had proceeded to Lyons on business of importance. One day as he was extremely engaged, he received a note containing these words from an unknown person: "If you do not come without

delay, to hear my confession, you will be answerable for my soul before God." He immediately gave directions that the person should proceed to the parlour of the convent of the Visitation, and that he would be soon there; he accordingly set off without delay. On approaching the convent, he observed a man of an unpromising aspect, who bore the appearance of a valet, and was holding two horses with the bridles in his hand. He proceeded to the parlour, where he found the writer of the note waiting for him. He was a person of a gigantic stature, of a singular and uncouth mien, with short hair, which began to shew the appearance of age. He wore the dress of a cavalier, with a country cloak for the purpose of disguise. He received the holy Bishop without much ceremony; and when he had him safe in the parlour, he shut the windows and the door and took the key, after having cut the bell rope, that he might not experience any interruption. While the holy prelate was considering the tendency of these precautions, the stranger begged him to be seated, threw himself at his feet and began a general confession. He told him, that he was a general of an order, that he had lived for a great length of time in a most frightful state of irregularity; that his bad example had corrupted his religious, and that he had never given himself the

trouble to correct or repress their disorders ; that God, after having abandoned him to the desires of his heart for several years, had at length taken pity of him ; that He had long moved him interiorly to reform his conduct ; that the shame of acknowledging so many disorders, and the apprehension of meeting with confessors, who might be austere and destitute of compassion for his weakness, had till then prevented the work ; that at length he had heard of his charity for penitents, and that on account of his reputation for meekness, he had come from a distant country to make to him a general confession, and to model his conduct by his advice. He then began his confession with so many sighs and tears, and continued it with such lively marks of true contrition, as made a deep impression on the holy prelate. He indeed treated him with his usual mildness ; but he was a stranger to that weak condescension which under the pretext of sparing the sinner, flatters him in his crimes. He gave him a penance proportioned to the excesses, of which he had been guilty ; laid down for him rules of conduct ; concerted measures with him to complete by letter the great work of his conversion, and dismissed him entirely a new man, without being known to any person but to the holy prelate. He afterwards was informed that his conversion was

attended with all the happy consequences, which he had hoped for ; that the greatest part of his religious moved by his example, had imitated his conversion, and that he had induced them to repair by penance, the scandals, which they had given by their disorders.

At this time he converted a religious who had relapsed, but who was now desirous of publicly abjuring heresy. The unfortunate person acknowledged that, though he was a priest and had been employed in teaching divinity in his order, he had never been induced from any errors which he had discovered in the Catholic doctrine, to leave the pale of the Church, as it had been industriously reported ; that he had taken this unfortunate step solely to gratify his evil inclinations ; that stimulated by remorse of conscience he had once made his abjuration before the holy Bishop of Geneva ; that a wife and family, with which he had been encumbered before his conversion, had engaged him to relapse into his former apostacy ; but that under a full conviction, that he could not be saved out of the pale of the Catholic Church, he was come a second time to throw himself at the feet of the holy prelate, and to protest that nothing should ever tear him from the bosom of the Church, in which he was determined to live

and to die. The holy prelate judged this second conversion sincere; and discovering in the penitent proofs of abilities and merit, he received him; but fearing necessity might oblige him to return to his former errors, he gave him a pension of four hundred livres, and detained him at Annecy.

He was at this period informed, that the King of England, shocked at the inconstancy of the English, who were continually introducing new sects, of which he was unable to check the progress, began to entertain favourable sentiments respecting the Catholic religion; and it was thought that, if some skilful prelate were to repair to his court, his conversion might be achieved. The holy prelate forgetting his infirmities, offered without hesitation, to undertake this painful task. But the Duke of Savoy, whose jealousy was easily awakened, never would consent that he should leave his dominions. It may however be pronounced, that there was perhaps not a Bishop throughout Europe more capable of conducting this intricate business, than the holy prelate. He was learned, skilled in controversy, possessed of a mild temper and an insinuating address; and what was a circumstance of a most favourable complexion, the King of England entertained

for him a high esteem, which he had openly expressed. But the time of the mercies of God on that kingdom, formerly so distinguished by a spirit of Catholicity, was not come; and it is not permitted to us to anticipate the seasons and the moments, of which He has reserved the knowledge to Himself.

In the mean time the holy prelate, thus constrained to edify his own diocese with the example of his eminent virtues, continued daily to display them with increased lustre. It happened at this period, that a gentleman, who had conceived for him the most virulent, resentment, in consequence of groundless rumours which he had never taken the trouble to investigate, made every attempt to wreak his revenge; calumnies, and the most atrocious accusations were employed for this ignoble purpose. But finding that he was unable to discompose such extraordinary patience, or excite the smallest degree of resentment, he determined to proceed to open outrage. For several successive nights, when every one was immersed in sleep, he appeared with dogs, horns and all the equipage of the chace, to raise a frightful clamour before the episcopal house. The attendants of the holy prelate indignant at such an aggression, and relying on the support of their

neighbours, were desirous of going out to repel by force, this unprovoked insolence. This was an event which the gentleman expected, and his design was to treat them in the roughest manner. But the holy prelate gave such strict prohibitions against this design, that no one durst disobey his orders. The gentleman despairing of success in his insolent purpose, proceeded to the most injurious language. The greatest asperity of abuse was employed by his desperate followers, and on a signal from the leader, they loaded themselves with stones and broke all the windows of the episcopal palace. The report of this outrage being spread, the friends of the holy prelate waited on him; and even the most moderate were of opinion, that he should solicit redress from the Senate and from his Sovereign. Francis replied, that he would by no means resort to that expedient; that such an application would ruin the unfortunate man, but that it was his intention to gain him. This answer was reported to the gentleman, and notwithstanding all his prejudices, he could not restrain his emotions. Some days after, the holy Bishop met him in the street, and accosted him with as much politeness as if he had never been injured by him; he then requested the favour of his friendship, and embraced him with the same cordiality, as if his conduct had been a subject of commendation

and not of complaint. The gentleman confused at a display of goodness almost without example, remained some time motionless, and unable to utter a word; but at length overcome by that generous turn of mind, which true sanctity alone can inspire, he asked his pardon, offered every kind of satisfaction he could desire, and was ever after his warmest friend and admirer.

A lady of quality having left a considerable legacy to a religious house, a person interested in the transaction, believed it to have been done by the advice of the holy prelate. Full of this prepossession the party waited on Francis; reproached him in the most select terms of abuse, and carried his impetuous sallies so far, as to lift up his hand to strike him. The holy prelate, instead of discovering the least emotion, spoke with extreme mildness, and attended the person to the door, after having fully convinced him of his mistake, and that he had borne no part in the transaction ascribed to his advice. The impetuosity of this person was of too violent a nature to be so suddenly calmed. Shame but too frequently prevents the acknowledgment of a mistake, and the farther the error has been followed, retraction becomes in proportion more difficult. A whole day passed without making any change in

the disposition of this person ; but on the following day, after seriously reflecting on his conduct, he went to the holy prelate, threw himself at his feet, and asked his pardon. He obtained it without delay, but with such demonstrations of kindness, as induced him ever after to speak of Francis as of a prelate of the most eminent sanctity. An advocate of Annecy did not conduct himself with the same propriety ; he carried his hatred of the holy prelate to a degree of phrensy, and omitted no opportunity of injuring him by calumnies, and every method which he could devise. His friends had often reproved him for his conduct, had convinced him of his error, and had clearly predicted, that some signal disaster would befall him. Some days after, meeting the holy prelate, he fired a pistol at him, and wounded one of his attendants near his person. He was instantly seized and conducted to prison ; and notwithstanding every effort on the part of the holy prelate to save him, he was condemned to die. The charity of the Saint was not satisfied ; he obtained a respite for the criminal, and solicited his pardon with so much importunity of the Duke of Savoy, that it was at length granted. Having obtained this favour, he went in person to the unfortunate man to convey the intelligence. An indulgence so little expected was insufficient to soften his heart ;

he loaded the holy prelate with fresh abuse ; and though the humble Bishop condescended even to ask his pardon, the ill-fated wretch could not be induced to enter into himself ; the Bishop however, gave him a full pardon, but struck at his obduracy of heart, he told him at parting : “ I have rescued you from the justice of men ; you will fall into the hands of God, and then I shall not have the same influence.” The event justified the prediction ; the justice of God overtook him, and he afterwards made an unhappy end.

It would be difficult to carry to greater lengths the practice of meekness and patience ; this conduct, however, so much recommended to our attention in the Gospel, so much applauded by God himself, did not always meet with the approbation of his friends. Some reproached him with not sufficiently supporting the dignity of his character, and ventured to declare, that his excessive mildness rendered him contemptible. But this holy Bishop, trained in the school of Jesus Christ, replied to some, that nothing was more becoming the character of a Bishop, than meekness and patience ; that he was well aware, that the world and self-love had established very different maxims ; but that the rule of the Gospel, and the example of our Redeemer, were ever opposed to

such principles, and that he should always deem it his glory to follow his master. To others he observed, that he had laboured all his life, to acquire a small stock of meekness, and that he considered it a duty not to lose in an hour the fruit of so many years' labour; that God had reserved vengeance to himself, and that to us He had left only the glory and advantage of pardoning. His meekness was however circumscribed within due limits, and when justice demanded it, was made subservient to episcopal firmness. Such examples of this kind have already been recorded during the mission in Chablais, and in other occurrences, that no doubt can be entertained on the subject; some farther instances, however, may be inserted in this place.

Certain gentlemen of his diocess, elate with the advantages of birth, and holding the clergy in contempt, were desirous of engaging a curate in proceedings, which he judged incompatible with his character; and on his declining the invitation, they treated him with insult. The curate preferred his complaints to the Bishop, who examined them; and having found them just, he espoused his cause, sued these gentlemen, and obtained a sentence against them. The sentence was going to be carried into execution, when

these persons testified their repentance of their improper conduct, and made an apology. This step though late, gave satisfaction to the Bishop; he paid them a visit, and after remonstrating with them with great mildness on the nature of their proceeding, he begged them to live on good terms with the priests of his diocese, and spoke no more of the sentence, or of the costs, than if he had gained no advantage. This firmness was carried to still greater lengths on another occasion; for he refused a priory even to the Duke of Savoy, who solicited that situation in favour of an ignorant priest, and one altogether destitute of any qualities necessary to such a charge. This priest depending on such powerful support, and enraged at the refusal, had the insolence to present to the holy prelate, while he was assisting at the Divine office, a libel in which his reputation was maliciously aspersed. The canons, indignant at such an injurious proceeding, insisted that he should be taken into custody; but the holy prelate opposed that plan; he observed, that repentance would shortly ensue, and that it was more desirable to obtain a voluntary retractation than to employ force. Accordingly this man having reflected on the consequences of his conduct, if the Duke of Savoy should be informed of it, went on the following day, threw himself at his feet, and

asked his pardon. However this conduct might have been influenced, by motives of interest, the holy prelate was not satisfied with granting pardon; he wrote in his favour to his Sovereign, and obtained for him a respectable situation, more adapted to his talents than any ecclesiastical function.

With the same character of firmness he defended the property and the rights of his church against the officers of the Duke of Nemours. In that cause he sustained many suits; and, as his undertakings were always just, guided by previous consultation, and wholly uninfluenced by passion, he invariably succeeded. These officers, actuated by desperation, concerted measures of revenge by exciting against him the resentment of the Duke of Nemours; they were but too successful in their designs; his family was involved in the disgrace, and the holy prelate felt himself constrained to leave Annecy, and retire to the Castle of Sales. Some time after he wrote to the Duke in a style of firmness to justify himself and his family; the Duke was at length undeceived; he reinstated him in his esteem and friendship, and from that period, no effort could ever alter his opinion, with respect to the merits of the holy Bishop. While the holy prelate was thus practising with a

degree of studious emulation every Christian and Apostolical virtue, and by the daily operation of grace, which was increasing in his soul, was more and more disengaging his heart from sensible objects to live for God alone, his body was declining; that constitution once so vigorous, but so little spared, gradually yielded to the pressure of labours, with which it had been overburdened; and the hour was now approaching, when the Just Judge was preparing to give him the crown of justice, and to reward him for His own gifts, which had been so properly applied. There are few persons, whatever height of sanctity they may have attained, who on feeling the approach of a moment so terrible for those who have forgotten God, but so full of consolation for those who have lived only for Him, do not make some alteration in their former mode of life. A spirit of retirement, and a general attention to duty are observed to increase; self-examination is conducted with more care; and whether we may be alarmed by the justice of God, or consoled by His bounty, it is rare that we preserve the same turn of mind.

The anticipated knowledge, which God had given to the holy prelate of his approaching dissolution, produced no change in his conduct; as he

had always lived, as if each day were to be his last, his deportment was marked by the most perfect uniformity. It was only remarked that he was more frequently engaged in private interviews with the Bishop of Chalcedon, his brother and coadjutor. On those occasions they examined with care the different notes relative to the state of the diocese, which they had either jointly or separately prepared; they reconsidered all that they had remarked with respect to the manners and dispositions of the people and the pastors, and their good and bad qualities, as also respecting the means which they deemed most conducive to banish irregularity, and to establish or to strengthen the practice of virtue; and as the holy Bishop was persuaded, that the greatest account which he should have to give to God, would relate to the souls, with which he had been entrusted, he spared no pains either to repair what he thought he had neglected, or to complete what was only begun. The assiduous application, which he gave to this labour, awakened the solicitude of the Bishop of Chalcedon for his health, and he thought it a duty to remonstrate on the subject; but the holy prelate incapable of any tenderness towards himself when the duties of his situation called for his attention, replied with his usual meekness: "On the contrary, let us hasten; the

day declines, and the night approaches." These words which the Bishop of Chalcedon considered as a prediction of his approaching end, as they proved to be, excited his affliction and sensibility. The holy prelate perceiving it, embraced him tenderly and said: " Restrain, my dear brother, those tears so unbecoming a Christian, and still more a Bishop; it belongs only to infidels, who have no expectation of a better life, to be discomposed at the loss of their present existence."

In this manner were they employing their time, often interrupting their labours by pious conversation, when the holy prelate received a letter from the Duke of Savoy. He was commissioned to meet his Highness at Avignon, whither he was repairing to pay his respects to Lewis XIII. who had lately reduced to obedience the Calvinists of Languedoc. The Prince and Princess of Piedmont, the King's sister, were to be of the party; they eagerly desired that the Bishop of Geneva might proceed thither to perform his duty as first Almoner, and to furnish the benefit of his advice in many transactions which they had to conduct. As the declining state of his health rendered such a journey unadvisable, the Bishop of Chalcedon was of opinion, that he should send his excuses, and he offered to write to the Duke for this pur-

pose. But the holy prelate was of a contrary sentiment, which he supported with two reasons; the first was, that as he was invested with the dignity of first Almoner, it was just that on some occasions he should perform the duty; the other was, that the interview of the Most Christian King with their Royal Highnesses, was a valuable opportunity which God presented to him to ensure advantages to the Catholic religion in that part of his diocese, which lay in the dominions of his Majesty, and that he thought himself bound not to lose the occasion. This last reason appeared stronger than any opposite representation; thus having but a few days to prepare for his journey, he began by making his will, and by placing every thing in such order, as if he had been on the eve of his dissolution. These arrangements could not be so concealed, as not to be spread abroad. On this occasion it appeared how much he was beloved by his people; the suspicion of his approaching end excited a general consternation. He never went abroad without being saluted by a crowd of people; all persons left their houses, workmen quitted their labour in crowds to solicit his blessing. The holy prelate was not satisfied with giving his benediction; he stopped almost at every step; to some he suggested a word of consolation, to others he gave an encouragement to

patience. He distributed his charities to all who asked, and exhorted all to love and serve God, in the manner most suitable to their respective callings. Even the smiling infant felt the impression of his sanctity; many in the arms of the nurse were often observed to discover an impatience to be placed near his person. His goodness and condescension never suffered him to neglect such applications; he stopped for a child with as much readiness as for any person of an advanced age. He made the sign of the Cross on their breast, their forehead, their mouth or their eyes; and this was scarcely ever performed without a good effect. Many were observed instantly to recover from pains in the teeth, from the cholic and other slight disorders, incident to that period of life. His almoners and other attendants, often expressed their impatience at his attention to children; on those occasions the holy Bishop would observe, that Jesus Christ had treated them in the same manner, that He had shewn them a tender affection, and that there could be no impropriety in imitating Him.

On the eve of his departure he went early to see his dear daughters of the Visitation; he took his last farewell, gave them his blessing, and left them overwhelmed with grief. He then ascended

the pulpit to take leave of his people. His discourse was moving, animated, full of unction. At the conclusion he told them that he should never see them more, and he entreated them to beseech Almighty God to have compassion on his soul. At this pathetic address his audience melted into tears; all without a single exception exhibited marks of the most lively sensibility. On the appointed day, he departed from Annecy, accompanied by the Bishop of Chalcedon, the leading members of the clergy and the principal persons of the city, who attended him to Scissel. On that spot, where they were to separate, after returning thanks to them in the most tender terms, he threw himself on his knees, and raising his hands and eyes to heaven, he begged of God in a strain of devotion, which drew tears from all his attendants, to be graciously pleased to preserve the people, whom He had entrusted to him, to be Himself their pastor, and to repair by the abundance of His graces the faults which he had committed either by his negligence, or his want of capacity; and he concluded his prayer with the same words, which Jesus Christ addresses to His eternal Father: * *Holy Father, I pray for those whom thou hast given me, because they are thine. Preserve them for the honour of thy name.*

* Joa. 17.

Then giving his blessing to all present, and begging of God to bless them, he embraced them and recommended himself to their prayers. He then embarked on the Rhone about the middle of November, in the year one thousand six hundred and twenty-two, in a season so inclement, that he was extremely incommoded by the journey. His attendants were of opinion that he should remain some days at Lyons to take repose; but he determined to continue his journey, and the reason which he assigned was, that he felt it a duty to hasten to Avignon before the arrival of their Highnesses, and that he had no time to lose.

It appeared in this journey, how much the reputation of his sanctity had been every where diffused. Whole cities with their clergy, went to receive him in procession on his landing, and conducted him to church chaunting the *Te Deum*. But his humility suggested feelings incompatible with such honours; he concealed the marks of his dignity, and forbade his name to be mentioned. He thus arrived at Avignon with as much secrecy as he could enforce, on the eve of the magnificent entry of His Most Christian Majesty into that city on his return from the taking of Montpellier. His attendants by a casualty, procured lodgings for him in a situation, by which the King passed

on the following day. This was for him an occasion of mortification; for instead of satisfying innocent curiosity in beholding a monument of public magnificence, he shut himself up in a cabinet, and devoted to prayer the whole time that the spectacle lasted. The thunder of the artillery excited his attention; and he made on the occasion this Christian reflection: That God gave to Princes, in the midst of the honours they received, a great lesson of humility; that the report of the cannon which was heard but for a moment, and evaporated in smoke, taught them that their glory would be brought to a close, and after a short duration would vanish like a dream. The Vice-legate on hearing of the arrival of the Bishop of Geneva, paid him a visit, and on all occasions gave him every demonstration of honour; the court of France treated him with the same distinction; and when he went to wait on the King he received such extraordinary marks of esteem, that every person, influenced by the example of his Majesty, shewed that consideration, which was justly due to his character and virtue. The Duke of Savoy was expected, when his son the Prince Cardinal arrived. He brought intelligence, that as the season was too far advanced to pass the Alps, the Duke was unable to perform the journey; he made an apology to the King, and

assured his Majesty, that the Prince and Princess of Piedmont would repair to Lyons to pay their respects. The court departed some time after ; and the holy prelate accompanied the Cardinal who had orders from the Duke not to quit the King.

On his arrival at Lyons, he found many persons of respectability, who offered him lodgings ; Ollier, the intendant of the Province, who lived near the convent of the Visitation, begged him to accept the use of a very commodious apartment. The Jesuits in that city made him an offer of their house of St. Joseph ; but the holy prelate gave a general answer to all his friends, that foreseeing the difficulty of procuring lodgings, while the two courts of France and Savoy were in town, he had provided for the occasion ; and that he knew of a lodging, which would be sufficiently commodious. He was believed on his word ; but the surprise was general when it was known, that he had no other accommodation, than an apartment belonging to the gardener of the Visitation. The importunities of his friends were renewed to procure for him a lodging more suitable to his dignity. But the holy prelate, who was never better accommodated than when he was enabled to imitate the poverty of Jesus Christ, appeared so de-

terminated not to quit his abode, that all solicitations became useless. The most singular part of the transaction was, that his attendants were better accommodated than himself. But that was his general practice; and when he could choose for himself, he selected for his own use whatever was the meanest and least valuable; and on this he insisted with so much resolution, that it was vain to contest the point. This appeared on his return from Avignon. The progress of the court through those parts rendered all accommodation extremely rare. He directed his attendants to find lodgings as they could; but they always found accommodations superior to those of their master; for on one occasion he was obliged to retire to a hut, in which he passed the night in his clothes on straw. When he was told, that such inconveniences, which he was never studious to avoid, would finally injure his health, he replied, that his constitution was naturally robust, and that delicate management would only contribute to weaken it, that on the contrary a moderate share of fatigue served to maintain its vigour. Thus was he careful to conceal under specious reasons that spirit of mortification, which animated all his actions. He was desirous of pleasing God only; for which reason he wished the motives which prompted his conduct to be known to Him

alone. There is nothing which challenges praise more than the exercise of virtue; but there is nothing more injurious to its progress; commendation therefore cannot be avoided with too much care.

The first attention of the holy prelate, on his arrival at Lyons, was to pay his respects to their Majesties, to the Prince, to the Princess of Piedmont, and to his friends at both the courts. His Most Christian Majesty had inherited of Henry the Great, his august father, that esteem and affection which had always been shewn to the holy prelate; the Queens, Mary of Medici and Anne of Austria, had a peculiar regard for him; their opinion of his merit bordered on veneration; the Prince and Princess of Piedmont did not yield to them in those sentiments, and the two courts with a species of emulation did that justice to his eminent sanctity, which, notwithstanding his endeavours to conceal it, shone in all his actions. So many attractions, which appeared calculated to secure an attachment to the world, had no other effect than to excite his disgust; always on his guard against every object that could seduce his virtue, as soon as he had performed his duty, and satisfied the calls of charity and decorum, he retired to his dear daughters of the Visitation,

and was eager to form them to perfection, as he knew that his end was approaching, and that in a short time he should be enabled to assist them only by his prayers.

Thus was he occupied, when the fathers of the Society of Jesus invited him to preach on the second Sunday of Advent in the church of their great College; he complied with their wishes, and performed the task with such zeal, as clearly shewed that the power of grace raises the agent above the weakness of nature. As he was returning home after this sermon, he met a gentleman who had been very rich, but who was now reduced to extreme poverty by gaming and debauchery. This unfortunate man asked for charity; and the holy prelate assisted him so abundantly, that the person in deep surprise followed him for some time, returning the warmest acknowledgments, and frequently repeating that he would beg of God to pay him a hundred-fold. "You will oblige me much," said the holy Bishop; "but lose no time in procuring me this advantage; for in a short space neither you nor I shall need any farther succour." This was a clear prediction both of his own death and of that of the gentleman. The holy prelate did not reach the end of the month, and the other soon followed

him. On Christmas eve he was desired by the Queen Mother to perform in her name, the ceremony of erecting the Cross of the Capuchins; he did it, and preached with much zeal on the birth of Jesus Christ. On the following day he heard the confessions of the Prince and Princess of Piedmont, said mass for them, and gave them the holy communion. In the afternoon he clothed two sisters of the Visitation, preached on the mystery of the day, and held many pious conversations with the community. It was remarked, that he repeated more frequently than usual, this great maxim, that we are to ask for nothing, and to refuse nothing. Indeed no principle of conduct is more necessary to maintain peace and humility in monasteries, and to banish ambition and inquietude.

On the following day he perceived, that his sight and his strength decayed; he however said mass; after which he met the Duke of Bellegarde, and the Marquis Dalincourt, who conversed with him so long in the open air, which was excessively cold, that it considerably increased his indisposition. Thence he repaired to the Duke of Nemours, to reconcile that nobleman to those same officers in the Duchy of Genevois, who had behaved to him in so unhandsome a manner. This

Prince was much irritated at their conduct, and had determined to deprive them of their employments. But the irritation of his mind did not prevent him from observing the eagerness with which the holy prelate espoused their cause; he was struck with admiration at his conduct, and could not help saying to him repeatedly, that after the severe usage they had shewn him, they were not entitled to such kindness. The holy prelate did not abate his solicitations; and the Duke, who considered his requests as commands, at length yielded to his entreaties, in favour of persons, who so little merited his charitable interposition. As he intended to depart on that day, he waited again on the Prince of Piedmont, to take leave of their Highnesses, and to adjust some affairs, in which the interests of his church were concerned. Thence he returned home overpowered with fatigue. As his boots were presented to him, he at first refused to take them; but when his valet brought them to him again a little time after, he said: "I must put them on since you insist on it; but we shall not proceed far." He then wrote some letters of recommendation, which had been asked of him; and was visited by several persons, who came to take leave. But his servants having remarked, that he had not, agreeably to his usual practice, attended them to

the door, judged him to be very ill ; on examination they found him so extremely weak, that they put him to bed ; and in a short time he was seized with the fit of apoplexy, which hurried him to his grave.

We are now advanced to the close of this innocent and holy life ; a life precious in the sight of God, and always devoted to His service, or to that of mankind. If these moments prove formidable even to the just, they must be infinitely more terrible to the votaries of the world, who have spent their lives in an utter forgetfulness of God ; and who having lost sight of Him in the period of mercy, are constrained to remember Him, when the time of justice approaches. The death of St. Francis of Sales, like his life, was sweet, tranquil, full of submission to the orders of God and of confidence in His infinite mercy. Accustomed to despise this world, and to view the present life as a state of exile, he beheld with joy the approaching dissolution of his body ; he regretted nothing, because he had loved nothing but agreeably to the order of God ; and filled with a desire of possessing Him, his thoughts were directed to creatures only for the purpose of completing his sacrifice. This will appear from all the circumstances of this happy death ; they are of a nature too edifying not to be recorded.

* As soon as it was known at Lyons, that the holy prelate was seized with a dangerous illness, a general eagerness was manifested to pay him a visit. The Jesuits of St. Joseph were the first, who performed this charitable duty. As soon as St. Francis perceived the superior, attended by the brother who acted as an apothecary, and brought remedies with an eager desire to afford him relief, he said, " You see me, Reverend Father, in a situation, in which I stand in need of nothing but the mercy of God, and in which I expect every thing from His bounty." The father replied, that God never abandons His own; he then asked him, whether if it should be the will of God to call him, he was ready to obey the order. The holy Bishop replied, " I have never had any other will than His; He is my Sovereign Master, and may dispose of me as He pleases." † He then asked to make his profession of faith; he did it with great sentiments of piety, and desired the assistants to bear witness, that he had always lived, and that he died in the Catholic religion. As his malady increased, though the apoplexy was not yet formed, and he was fearful of losing that presence of mind so necessary to receive the sacraments with that decency and devotion which are

* Aug. of Sales, *ibid.* † Bull of his canonization.

due to them, he asked for the Extreme Unction; his frequent vomiting not allowing the administration of the Viaticum. The physicians, who had no time to lose before the application of the intended remedies, opposed this request and said they would pronounce, when it should become necessary.

At the same time, the Vicar General of the Archbishop of Lyons arrived, to ask him if he were willing that the forty hours' prayers should be performed for the recovery of his health, in the church of the Visitation; he replied, that he did not deserve it. The Vicar General urged his request, and asked, if he was unwilling that prayers should be offered for him. "On the contrary," replied the holy Bishop, "You will do me a great kindness; I never stood in greater need of them." As it was apprehended, that he would fall into a lethargy, a clergyman who was present, thought proper, in order to keep him awake, to ask him if he was not a Calvinist, and he added, that from his long communication with that party, some doubts might be entertained on the subject. At this the holy Bishop, whose faith had always been so pure, whose zeal for the conversion of heretics had ever been so ardent, exclaimed, "Oh! God preserve me from it; judge

By this proof ;” and he immediately made the sign of the cross. He was afterwards heard to repeat : “ My God, the treason would be too notorious ; you know my heart.” The Vicar General some time after asked him, if he was not afraid of death ; and he added, that the greatest Saints had always dreaded that event. The holy prelate replied, that they had reason ; as it decided our fate for an eternity, nothing could be more dreadful. “ O death,” continued the Vicar General, “ how bitter is thy remembrance.” The holy prelate added, “ to those who have placed their hopes and their salvation in riches.” The Vicar General then left him, and gave orders for the blessed sacrament to be exposed in all the churches for the re-establishment of his health ; but he was fruit ripe for heaven. As his disorder now appeared more powerful than the remedies, the physicians gave notice that it was time to administer the Extreme Unction. God gave him on this occasion a liberty of mind, which appeared unusual and even miraculous ; he received that sacrament with great sentiments of piety, answering himself the prayers with the most tender devotion. As the apoplexy appeared to form very gradually, and his presence of mind seemed to increase, it became a subject of deliberation, if the Viaticum should be administered ; but as he

had said mass that day, and the vomiting still continued, it was judged prudent to omit that general duty.

Scarcely had he received this last sacrament, when Madam Ollier, the wife of the Intendant, entered the apartment with her daughters, to ask his blessing for herself and her family. The Duke of Nemours arrived at the same time; he was confined to his bed in a fit of the gout, when he was informed that the holy prelate was dangerously ill. The violence of his disorder was insufficient to restrain him; he instantly rose, and ordered himself to be carried to see the dying Saint. He was unable to look at the holy man, labouring under the violence of a malady, and almost beyond all hope of recovery, without testifying his grief by an abundance of tears. He had laid aside his prepossessions, which had induced him to persecute the servant of God in more instances than one. But that eminent sanctity, which attracted universal respect, had constrained him to restore the holy Bishop to his esteem. From an enemy he was become an admirer, and was desirous of giving a public proof of the change; he threw himself at his feet, took him by the hand, kissed it, watered it with his tears, and begged his blessing for himself, and for the Prince of Genevois.

his eldest son. As it was supposed, that the violence of his malady prevented him from noticing the action of the Duke, he was asked if he knew him; he answered that it was the Duke of Nemours, that he was born his vassal, that he had always been his humble servant, and begged of God to bless him and his illustrious house; in saying these words, he gave him his benediction.

Scarcely had the Duke left him, when the Bishop of Damascus entered the room; he was an intimate friend, for whom the holy prelate entertained the highest regard. The Bishop thus accosted him: "My dear brother, I am come to give you all the assistance in my power; for you know it is written: *that a brother assisted by a brother, is like a city well fortified.*" "It is true," replied the holy prelate, giving him his hand, "and it is again written, *the Lord will save both one and the other.*" "Place your confidence in the Lord," said the Bishop, "and He will feed us," answered the holy prelate. A short time after, he repeated these words of the sacred scripture: *My heart and my flesh are rejoiced in the living God. I will sing the mercies of the Lord for ever. When shall I appear before His face? * * * * Shew me, O my beloved, where you*

feed, where you repose at mid-day. The Archbishop of Embrun, going to visit him about the same time, found him engaged with God, and heard him repeat with great fervour those words of the scripture: *O my God, my desire is before you, and my groanings are not hidden from you. My God and my all, my desire is that of the eternal hills.* In the mean time, as his apoplexy was gradually forming, many violent remedies were resorted to to check its progress. A blister had been applied to his head, and in taking it off, the skin had been forcibly torn away. Caustics were twice applied to the neck and the top of the head, which burnt the flesh to the bone. During these violent operations, the holy prelate, who had lost neither his senses nor his speech, uttered not the smallest complaint; he only vented some sighs, and shed tears which were drawn from him by the violence of the pain. But as he regarded these sufferings as pains due to his sins, and as satisfactions to the Divine justice, who leaves nothing unpunished, he often repeated these words of the Psalmist; *Wash me O Lord from my iniquities, take away my sin, purify me more and more.* As his pains increased, they served only to inflame his ardour for God. *What do I here, would he say, O my God, separated from you? Come to me, or command me to go to you.*

Draw me from this valley of tears, and I will run after the odour of your perfumes.

Such tender sentiments, so worthy of a Saint at the point of leaving the world, and of enjoying God; of a Saint whose extreme mildness of character excited the regard even of his enemies, drew tears from every eye; no one had self-command enough to speak to him, and nothing was heard but a confused noise of sighs and sobs. The holy prelate observing the tender scene, said to his weeping attendants; "My children be not afflicted; is it not necessary that the will of God should be accomplished?" After that he was silent for some time; when one of his attendants said: "My Lord you speak no more to us; let us have a word of edification." "Live in peace one with another," said the holy prelate, "but love God above all things." He was then silent again; but as it is of great importance to keep the patient awake in that species of malady, some one told him to keep up his spirits; for that one day he might be expected to fill the throne of Geneva. The Saint, who had ever shewn an aversion to the sentiments and language of worldly grandeur, replied with his usual humility; "I never desired the throne of Geneva; but the salvation of its inhabitants; their conversion, O my God, I have

always asked of you, and I now ask it with my whole heart." Another of the attendants somewhat more seasonably endeavoured to call his attention to his dear daughters of the Visitation, and asked him, if he had no message for them. "No," replied he, "I hope that the God of all power and all mercy, will complete what He has begun."

His disorder now began to increase, and all hopes of his recovery to vanish; this appearance of things induced the Father Ferrier, a Jesuit, who had never left him, to exhort him to make the prayer of St. Martin: "Lord, if I am still necessary to thy people, I decline not labour." The profound humility of the Saint was wounded at the thought of being compared to so great a man, whom however he greatly resembled; though he alone was not sensible of the fact. Accordingly instead of reciting this prayer, he repeated several times, that he was a useless servant, of whom neither God nor his people stood in need. His conduct was far different, when it was suggested to him to say: *Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God of Armies; all the earth is filled with His Glory.* He repeated these words several times; but it was observed, that the idea of the grandeur, of the sanctity and of the majesty of God,

had taken such possession of his mind, that he appeared in some degree lost in the immensity of the Godhead. He now lost his speech; and was perceived still to live only by the motion of his lips and of his eyes, which from time to time he raised to heaven. As he was supposed from every appearance to be near his end, the attendants began the usual prayers for recommending the departing soul; and as they were advanced to those words of the Litanies of the Saints, *Holy Innocents pray for him*, the venerable prelate lifted up his eyes to heaven for the last time, and resigned into the hands of God his pure and innocent soul with the same tranquillity, which had distinguished his life. His death happened on the twenty-eighth day of December, the festival of the Holy Innocents, of whom he had imitated the purity, at eight o'clock in the evening, in the year one thousand six hundred and twenty-two, in the fifty-sixth year of his age, and the twentieth of his episcopal dignity.

The reader may have remarked from all that the holy Bishop uttered during the last hours of his life, that death was to him rather a subject of joy than of terror; and certainly after having imitated the charity of the great Apostle during life, it would have been singular, if he had not as-

sumed his sentiments. Indeed if St. Paul could say, that Jesus Christ was his life; that he considered death as a gain, and that he longed for the dissolution of his body, in order to enjoy his Redeemer, is it a matter of surprise, that an Apostolic man like St. Francis of Sales, should have discovered so little fondness for life, so little apprehension of death, and desires so ardent to be united to the source of all blessings, to the God whom he had so ardently loved, and whom he had so faithfully served? How could he die in other sentiments, he who had so often repeated after St. Augustine, that if we consult the dictates of our faith, we shall find that a good life and the desire of death are inseparable? For agreeably to the sentiments of this illustrious doctor, no man can be truly a Christian without loving God, and no man can love Him, without longing for that eternal life, which He promises to His friends. This happy existence is believed by faith; it is expected by hope, and it is loved and desired by charity; thus in proportion to our advancement in the virtues, which are so essential to Christianity, we proceed in the exercise of this holy desire; and the more we desire eternal goods, we are in the same proportion disengaged from temporal enjoyments; and thus we are enabled to say with St. Paul, that it is a gain and an advan-

tage to depart hence, since death alone can lead us to the possession of God, and this possession ought in this world to be the object of true piety, and the ultimate end of all our desires. Such was the practice of all the Saints; and it may be pronounced, that something would have been wanting to the eminent sanctity of St. Francis of Sales, if he had died in other sentiments. It is true, that the justice of God cannot but excite terror; and that no one should believe himself so pure as not to fear it; and whatever we may have done for God, we should always consider ourselves, in imitation of the holy prelate, as useless servants. That hope, which should animate the Christian, would degenerate into presumption, if he thought himself worthy of the recompence, which God has prepared for those who love Him. But that charity, which excites a desire of death, in order to be inseparably united to God, is perfectly compatible with the fear which is to be entertained of His justice. Besides the infinite goodness of God, His unlimited mercies, the merits of Jesus Christ, who from His unbounded love has shed His blood for us, are so legitimate grounds of hope for a soul disengaged from the world, that this desire generally predominates over fear. Fear therefore is blended with hope and desire. But in Saints possessed of consummate charity,

hope and desire are ever found to be more powerful than fear; and this made the holy prelate exclaim: "O my God! come to me, or command me to go to you; draw me from this valley of tears, and I will run after the odour of your perfumes."

As soon as it was ascertained that he was dead, the body was opened to be embalmed; and then was discovered the truth of what has been recorded, that the incomparable meekness admired in his character, was not natural to him; for his gall was found to be a hard substance, divided into several smaller stones, by the continual violence which he had done himself to overcome anger, to which he was naturally subject. His dress and his linen, tinged with his blood, were divided among several persons of note, who received them with much respect, and who preserve them at this day as the most precious relics. The Duke of Nemours asked for a medal, which the holy prelate had always carried about him; his cross was sent to the Prince of Picdmont, and his ring to the Princess. His heart was placed in a silver bason, and carried in solemn procession, attended with a great number of flambeaus, to the convent of the Visitation of Bellecour at Lyons, where it was some days after deposited in a leaden box,

and then in a silver shrine. His body was embalmed, and cloathed with his pontifical ornaments. When the news of his death was spread abroad, persons flocked from all parts to testify the esteem, which they had conceived for his sanctity during his life. The people came in crowds to kiss his garments, to touch them with medallions, with cloths and beads, and the concourse was so great and lasted so long a time, that the difficulty was extreme to convey the body to the church of the Visitation. It was there placed on a state bed, and remained for two days, during which his funeral oration was pronounced, and the usual prayers recited. His remains were then placed in a coffin, and every thing was ready to convey them to Savoy, when the intendant of the province, at the desire of the inhabitants of Lyons, who could not endure the thoughts of losing such a precious deposite, issued a prohibition in the King's name, to proceed farther, without the orders of his Majesty.

This opposition obliged the family of Sales, whither the information was soon conveyed, to write to the Duke of Savoy; and that Prince dispatched immediately a messenger to His Most Christian Majesty, with a copy of the will of the holy prelate, which expressly enjoined that his

body should be buried at Annecy, in the church of the Visitation. It required the interposition of such a Prince, and no less a proof of the intention of the deceased Bishop, than a copy of his will in due form, to induce his Majesty to consent that his kingdom should be deprived of so precious a deposite. He accordingly dispatched orders, that the body should be conveyed to its destination. As soon as the news of the King's pleasure reached Annecy, the Chevalier of Sales, accompanied by many of his relations, and two Canons of the Cathedral of Geneva, repaired to Lyons to ensure the execution of the order. The injunctions of the King were so positive, that they could not be eluded; accordingly on the day appointed for the ceremony, the Vicar General, followed by a considerable number of the clergy and the people, proceeded to the church of the Visitation, whence he accompanied the venerable remains to some distance from the city. The inhabitants remained inconsolable on seeing themselves deprived of the precious remains of a Saint, who had honoured them so often with his presence during his life. On the road the inhabitants of the city, the town and the villages, ran in crowds to meet the body; and the clergy without invitation, accompanied it from one parish to another. As soon as it arrived within sight of Annecy, and its approach was

proclaimed by the sound of bells, a general appearance of mourning and desolation pervaded the city. Every person considered that he had lost in him whatever was most dear to his heart; and the poor in particular, who had always formed the principal object of his care, could admit of no consolation, when they reflected that they were bereaved of their father, their protector and their support. When the funeral train approached the city, the Bishop of Chalcedon, the brother and successor of the holy prelate, went out to meet it, followed by the clergy and the people, with tears starting in their eyes, and emulously exhibiting marks of the deepest affliction. The body was deposited for two days in the church of the Holy Sepulchre, while preparations were making for the solemn ceremony. When all arrangements were made the body was conveyed to the church of St. Francis, which supplied the place of a cathedral. The Bishop of Chalcedon celebrated mass; and after the funeral oration had been delivered, and the ceremony was concluded, the precious remains were conveyed to the church of the first monastery of Annecy, and interred near the great altar on the right hand, at some distance from the wall. A magnificent tomb was afterwards erected, embellished with columns of marble, and adorned with several inscriptions, to perpetuate to poste-

rity, the eternal remembrance of his virtues and of that eminent sanctity, which God crowned in heaven, whilst He honoured it on earth with a great number of miracles.

While those transactions were passing at Lyons, the Mother de Chantal was at Grenoble, whence she had to proceed by the order of the holy prelate, to Belley and to Chamberry. As she was praying for him on the day of the Holy Innocents, which was that of his death, she heard a voice, which distinctly uttered these words: *He is no more*. She took them in a figurative sense. "He is no more," said she, "it is true, O my God; he lives no more for himself; but he lives for you, and to make me live in you." As she had heard nothing of his death, not even of his illness, she reflected no farther on these words. Some days after she received a letter from the Bishop of Chalcedon, which brought the melancholy intelligence of the common loss they had suffered. She then comprehended the real meaning of the words: *He is no more*. For some time she indulged in the greatest extremity of grief; but then reflecting on all which she had ever heard from the holy prelate, concerning submission to the will of God, she thought it impossible to honour his memory in a better manner

than by practising his maxims, and executing his last injunctions. Accordingly after some days she departed for Belley and for Chamberry, and repaired to Annecy to adjust the funeral solemnity. Having performed this duty with that greatness of soul, which was natural to her, she with great application and labour, began to collect all the writings of the holy Bishop; and it is to her that we are indebted for the publication of his letters, his meditations, his entertainments, his sermons and his excellent book on the love of God. She then procured the composition of memoirs of the life of the holy prelate, and bestowed such unre-mitted attention on the business of attesting his miracles, and pursued this object with so much success, that it may be pronounced, that the Order of the Visitation owes to her efforts the canonization of their holy founder.

After having performed the tribute, which she considered due to the memory of this great man, she thought herself incapable of adopting a more proper mode of conduct, than by regulating in all respects the interior and exterior of the Order of the Visitation, which they had jointly established, agreeably to his spirit and maxims. With this view she assembled at Annecy all the ancient Superiors of the Order. They collected whatever

the holy Bishop had written for the direction and the perfection of the institute, and from these valuable remains they composed that performance, which they entitled their *Book of Customs*. The Mother de Chantal was unwilling to have any merit in this performance, but that of the greatest exactness in suffering nothing to be inserted, which was not from their holy founder, whether it was collected from notes in his hand-writing, or from the maxims which she had practised under his direction, and inserted in the rule. At length this holy woman, after having given to the Order innumerable examples of virtue, after having established seventy-five convents, during the nineteen years that she survived the holy prelate; after having proved herself in all respects his worthy spiritual daughter, and his faithful disciple, died at Moulins, in the odour of sanctity, on the thirteenth day of December, in the year one thousand six hundred and forty-one; her body was conveyed to Annecy, and interred in the church of the first convent of the Visitation.

Before her death she had the satisfaction of seeing his sanctity attested by many miracles, which were performed at his tomb and in other places by his intercession. In France miraculous operations of no less magnitude took place by

touching his heart which remained at Lyons in the monastery of the Visitation of Bellecour, where it is now preserved with much veneration. Some time after his death, the Duke of Vendome made a present to this convent of a golden heart to enclose that of the holy prelate, in acknowledgment of many favours, which he had obtained by his intercession. In the year one thousand six hundred and thirty, eight years after his death, King Lewis XIII. having been recovered from a dangerous illness, by the application of this sacred relic, made a present to this same convent of a heart somewhat larger than that which has been mentioned, as a perpetual memorial of his gratitude and of the credit of this great Saint before the throne of God. The late Queen Mother, Anne of Austria his spouse, has often testified that France was indebted to him for the preservation of the life of Lewis the Great; and that it was by his prayers that he had been delivered from imminent danger, to which he had been reduced by the small pox. These miracles, and many others too numerous to be recorded, having secured to him the veneration of people, who crowded to his tomb, and publicly invoked him as a Saint, induced the Order of the Visitation to apply to the Pope to obtain his beatification. His Holiness immediately named commissaries to take informa-

tion of his life and miracles. This information was conducted with the utmost caution; and it may safely be asserted, that the testimony of mankind can in no instance possess any force, if the miracles attested on that occasion are not deemed entitled to credit. Before this examination was completed, Innocent X. by whose orders it had been begun, died. Cardinal Fabio Chigi having succeeded him under the title of Alexander VII. solicitations to have the business concluded were renewed. Great hopes were entertained of a successful issue, as this Pope himself was enabled to furnish very authentic proofs of the sanctity of the Bishop of Geneva. For having been at Munster, in quality of Plenipotentiary, the year preceding his exaltation, he had there been cured of a dangerous illness, by the intercession of the holy Bishop; and he himself had acknowledged that he had been indebted to the efficacy of his prayers for the benefit of returning health, by sending a considerable sum to Annecy, to contribute to the building of a church on the spot, where his remains were deposited. He had likewise promised to promote with all his power his beatification, on his return to Rome.

These circumstances engaged the Duchess of Montmorency, who had retired to a convent of

the Visitation at Moulins, to write to him after his election, for the purpose of reminding him of his promise. She caused solicitations to be made to him by many Cardinals to whom she wrote ; but the Pope was more effectually solicited by a sense of gratitude, and by the indubitable and personal proofs, which he himself could produce of the sanctity of the Bishop of Geneva, and of the happiness which he enjoyed in heaven. Accordingly without waiting for the lapse of fifty years, which usually intervene between the death of a Saint and his beatification, he beatified him nine years sooner, on the twenty-eighth day of December, in the year one thousand six hundred and sixty-one ; and the brief was addressed to the first convent of Annecy. Then the body of the holy prelate was taken from the tomb, and placed on the altar in a superb silver shrine, presented for the purpose by the Duchess of Savoy, Christina of France. It was expected, that his canonization would take place the following year ; but as every thing is conducted at Rome with the maturest caution, three years elapsed, before any farther advances were made in the business.

This posture of affairs engaged His Most Christian Majesty, the Queens his mother and spouse, the Queen Dowager of England, their Polish Ma-

jesties, the Duchess of Savoy, the Duke and Duchess of Bavaria, to address to the Pope a request to conclude the business. The assembly of the clergy of France, the religious orders, the parliaments, the governors of provinces, joined their solicitations to this request; and to give more weight to the transaction, the King dispatched to Rome, the Bishops of Evreux and of Soissons, to make solicitations in his name, in conjunction with the Duke of Crequy, for the canonization of the Bishop of Geneva. The union of so many parties in one general solicitation, completed the determination of the Pope. Accordingly, after the usual formalities and ceremonies, on Sunday, the nineteenth of April, in the year one thousand six hundred and sixty-five, he was canonized with much solemnity; and the Pope ordered his festival to be celebrated in the Church every year, on the twenty-ninth day of January, under the title of Confessor Bishop. The Pope sent the bull to the Nuns of the Visitation of Annecy, and accompanied it with a superb standard. On one side was represented a full length likeness of the holy prelate in his pontifical dress, and on the other, the same figure in his canonical robes, such as he wore, when he was provost of Geneva. In this bull, which was afterwards addressed to all Churches in communion

with the See of Rome, the Pope, after bestowing on St. Francis, all the commendations which can be given to the greatest Saints, speaks of him in high terms of applause for having converted seventy-two thousand heretics. This fact, surprising as it appeared, was considered at Rome; as so well attested, after the most rigorous investigation, that it has been since inserted in the lessons, which are annually read in the Church on the day of his festival. Besides a great number of miracles, which had been verified, the Pope records seven of the clearest and most authentic description. The first relates to a dead person raised to life; the second to one born blind, who recovered his sight at his tomb; the third and fourth regard the restoration of a person in the palsy and of one who had lost the use of his limbs; the fifth is of a female raised from death to life; the sixth and seventh refer to the sudden cure of persons at his tomb, who had been deprived of the use of their limbs. Those who are acquainted with the extreme precautions adopted at Rome in the verification of miracles, will without hesitation, believe what is here recorded; otherwise all human testimony must be subjected to doubt, and we must be reduced to believe nothing, but what we see with our own eyes; a system, which no rational man ever yet devised. The following

year the Pope sent to his tomb a cross and six silver candlesticks, of great weight and curious workmanship; this present he accompanied with a brief addressed to the Nuns of the Visitation of Annecy; which contained an additional panegyric of St. Francis of Sales. In this address he says among other topics, that the wisdom and the virtues of this holy prelate diffuse a salutary light throughout the whole Christian world; that he had been enlightened with its rays from his tender years; that as to himself, having viewed with admiration his splendid merit and his divine mode of instruction, he had chosen him as his principal guide and master, in order to follow his footsteps in every occurrence of life. In a word, he repeats in the course of the brief, that the heroic virtues and salutary writings of St. Francis, may be called so many flaming torches, which diffuse fire and light over every part of the Church. To this applause of the Pope, might be added the commendations, which the greatest men of our age have bestowed on St. Francis; but as such a detail would exceed the boundaries of history, it may be sufficient to observe, that there are few Saints in the Church, who have been more generally respected. From all parts of Europe persons crowded to his tomb; the reputation of his sanctity has reached the East Indies, and whole na-

tions in these remote regions, have chosen him their protector before the throne of God. It is thus that the Almighty, the father of light and of mercy, the God of all truth, after having promised that those, who shall believe in Him, and shall imitate the sanctity of His son, shall perform greater miracles than He exhibited on earth ; it is thus that this just Judge crowns His own gifts. For to say all in one word, whatever excellence we admire in the Saints, either during their lives or after their deaths, the Catholic Church recognises none which does not proceed from God. She openly professes to believe, that the Saints enjoy no distinction before God, but in consequence of their virtues, that their virtues are gifts of Divine grace, and that eternal happiness, which is the reward of those virtues, is attained only by an humble dependance, a perfect submission and conformity to the Divine will.

It was by this constant submission to the orders of God, and by an exact and faithful observance of His commands and counsels, that St. Francis of Sales acquired that eminent sanctity, which the Father of mercies has been pleased to crown in heaven, and which the Church proposes to the faithful on earth as an object of imitation. He had received from God, like Solomon, a natural

inclination to virtue, a tender and beneficent soul, a heart upright, firm, unshaken, and ever devoted to duty. Raised above that fatal inconstancy, which produces falls and relapses, and prevents men from walking steadily in the path of virtue, he loved, he was enamoured of it, as soon as it was known to him; he with unremitting ardour practised its precepts. By a special grace of God, he preserved to his death the innocence with which he was clothed in baptism; this blessing was the foundation of all his distinguished virtue. A respectful fear, a tender love of God, an ardent charity for his neighbour, an indefatigable zeal for the salvation of souls, a profound humility, an invincible patience, a degree of meekness not to be ruffled by any event, a contempt of himself, which could not be exceeded, these were streams which flowed from so pure a source. Trained from his earliest years in the school of Jesus Christ, he respected, he loved with unabated affection the Church as his mother; he constantly adhered to her doctrine; he cautiously avoided both in his life and his writings those unfrequented roads, those private and obscure paths, which never fail to lead to the precipice; in a word, he was learned without pride, without attachment to his own judgment; humble without meanness; firm without obstinacy; mild without weakness, and re-

mote from that timid, interested and unmanly complaisance, which flatters crime under the pretext of sparing the sinner. Always intent on the glory of God, and the salvation of souls, he made himself all to all, in order to gain all to Jesus Christ.

It is this glory of Almighty God, which the writer has had in view in giving the life of St. Francis of Sales; the same spirit should animate the reader. For after all that can be said in favour of the Saints, whatever be their merit, it is God who has sanctified them by His grace, enlightened them by His wisdom, and supported them by the force of His divine spirit; and they were not on earth, nor are they in heaven any thing, but what He has made them by His infinite mercy. This truth they always acknowledged; and this will be displayed in the following book, which will treat of the spirit, of the maxims and sentiments of the holy Bishop, whose actions have been recorded.

END OF THE SEVENTH BOOK.

THE LIFE

OF

Saint Francis of Sales.

BOOK VIII.

C O N T E N T S

OF THE

EIGHTH BOOK.

I. PORTRAIT of the interior of St. Francis of Sales by the Mother de Chantal....**II.** That the doctrine and the conduct of St. Francis of Sales cannot be charged with relaxation; their conformity to the rules of the Gospel....**III.** Continuation of the same subject....**IV.** Of the charity of St. Francis of Sales; of the obligation under which all mankind lie of loving God. How much the holy prelate was distinguished by this virtue....**V.** Of the love of St. Francis of Sales for Jesus Christ....**VI.** Of the love of St. Francis of Sales for the Church....**VII.** Of faith and confidence in God; how much St. Francis of Sales excelled in these two virtues....**VIII.** Of prayer; how much the holy prelate recommended it to all Christians; his sentiments on this subject....**IX.** Of purity of heart; how much St. Francis of Sales excelled in this virtue, and to what lengths he thought it should be carried....**X.** Of exterior humility,

or of the contempt of honours. Rules of conduct given by the holy prelate to persons invested with dignity....

XI. Of interior humility which resides in the heart. Sentiments of the holy prelate concerning true and false humility....

XII. Continuation of the same subject....

XIII. That the love and practice of humility are not incompatible with a reasonable regard to reputation....

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XV. Of the care of the poor; of Alms-deeds; distinguished conduct of the holy prelate in this particular....

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XVII. Of Christian friendship; of the choice of friends; sentiments and conduct of the holy Bishop with respect to his friends; that private friendships are not suitable to persons who live in religious communities and to clergymen; inconveniences resulting from such connections....

XVIII. Of sincerity and uprightness of heart; how much they formed a prominent part of his character. His sentiments on lies and equivocation. Rules replete with prudence for conversation....

XIX. Of meekness and patience; remedies against anger. Sentiments of the holy prelate on this subject....

XX. Continuation of the same subject. Of true and false meekness; concerning the meekness, which we are to shew towards ourselves....

XXI. Of Law-suits; how much they are opposed to the Spirit of the Gospel; how much, according to St. Francis of Sales, they are to be avoided....

XXII. Of luxury; sentiments of the holy prelate on decorum in dress....

XXIII. Of the diversions which are permitted and are forbidden; sentiments of the holy prelate on gaming. Rules for persons in the world.

THE LIFE
OF
SAINT FRANCIS OF SALES,
BISHOP AND PRINCE
OF GENEVA.

BOOK THE EIGHTH,

Which contains his spirit, his conduct and his maxima.

I.

*Portrait of the interior of St. Francis of Sales, by the
Mother de Chantal.*

AS the interior is the source of sentiments and of maxims ; as it regulates the conduct, and almost invariably gives a general impression to the character, it is not easy to mistake one, when the other is known. But in the great mass of mankind, this secret truth is so concealed, that we are more frequently reduced to the necessity of forming a judgment of the mind and the heart by their actions and their words, than of estimating the merit of their deeds and their conversation by any knowledge of their interior. Hence the opi-

nions, which are formed of the characters of men, prove so often fallacious; we judge of the interior by the external appearance, when they are but too frequently found to be at variance. The mouth, says the holy scripture, speaks from the abundance of the heart; but the heart does not always feel the expressions of the mouth. The most usual way of knowing mankind is to frame a judgment from their sentiments and conduct; but the most certain method beyond all comparison is to regulate this judgment by the mind and the heart. *A bad tree can never produce good fruit; a good tree can never produce bad fruit.* It is by these two methods that we can estimate the character of St. Francis of Sales. We are acquainted with his actions, we are in possession of his writings; but we have likewise the portrait of his heart and his mind. The author of this portrait is above all suspicion; it is the Mother de Chantal, that enlightened and upright person, who had studied him so long, to whom he opened the inmost recesses of his heart, and whose knowledge of him was by consequence so accurate.

We read in the history of her life,* that a great servant of God, in whom she reposed unlimited

* Maupas life of the Mother de Chantal.

confidence, requested of her after the death of this great Saint, to commit to writing whatever she knew of his interior. She at first from sentiments of humility declined the proposal; but as the request was earnestly repeated and enforced, she complied with it from a motive of submission, not believing it lawful to disobey the injunction of a person, who held the place of God. The following is the substance of what she has left on record concerning the mind and heart of the holy prelate almost in her own words. "He possessed," says she, "a mind vigorous, polished and universal, and our Lord had spared nothing for the perfection of this work, which His Almighty hand had formed for Himself." Though evenness of temper is not often associated with a considerable portion of mental vigour, she assures us that "his equality of mind was incomparable; that he had never been observed to be inflamed with passion, though he was constitutionally full of warmth and fire." Great strength of mind usually accompanies an equality of temper; it would otherwise be difficult to support the various accidents and reverses of life, and even the trials to which the Saints are more than usually exposed. This quality she ascribes to the holy prelate. "His force of mind," continues she, "was displayed in a constant course of virtue; in this

particular no one ever observed him deficient in a single instance. Who ever saw his patience shaken, his mien deficient in modesty, or in any manner ungracious, or his soul agitated on any occasion."

To these qualities, which may be denominated natural perfections, though they are unquestionably very distinguished gifts of God, the Mother de Chantal adds that of faith in an eminent degree. "I discovered," says she, "in my venerable guide and father, 'a gift of perfect faith, accompanied with great light, certitude, predilection and extreme sweetness. His conversations with me on this subject were admirable; and he once acknowledged to me, that God had favoured him with a considerable portion of light; indeed his life and writings, are vouchers of this fact. God had diffused over his soul, or as he expressed it, over the superior part of his soul so bright a light, that he saw with a distinct view the truths of faith and their excellence. That occasioned the greatest ardour of devotion, and a degree of ravishing delight in his will, notwithstanding his continual exterior occupations; for he kept his mind in an interior solitude, which never suffered him to lose for a moment the presence of God.'" Confidence in God and abandonment to His Pro-

vidence, flowed from this source of a lively and animated faith; he valued but in a very slight degree natural and acquired light. "He often told us," continues the Mother de Chantal, "that if he had to pass through life again, he would undervalue human prudence more than ever, in order to commit himself, from the earliest dawn of reason, to the guidance of Divine Providence. He induced the souls which he directed to practice this abandonment, as the surest method of perfection. When agreeably to the suggestions of human prudence he foresaw any impossibility in the accomplishment of his designs, he redoubled his confidence in God, and never entertained firmer hopes of success, than when he was left to the single support of Providence; and in that situation he preserved an easy and contented mind." This abandonment to Providence was not the effect of that inactivity and indolence, which are often observed in persons otherwise virtuous and devoted to God. The holy prelate was blessed with a great and active soul; he expected every thing from God, but he laboured with as much spirit, as if success were to depend on his own individual exertions. "He possessed," adds the Mother de Chantal, "a most vigorous and generous spirit in encountering labour, and in advancing the enterprises, which God sug-

gested, beyond any thing that ever fell under my observation." "When our Lord," would he say, "entrusts an affair to us, we are to employ every resource in our power to remove obstacles in our way, and then look for success with tranquillity."

Disinterestedness is one of the surest marks of a great soul; a groveling mind is perpetually occupied about itself; this may be denominated the centre on which it turns, and from which it seldom moves; even the most virtuous persons often stand in need of consolation; there are but few, who serve God gratuitously and without an immediate view to themselves. The holy prelate by no means belonged to this class. "He used to say," continues the Mother de Chantal, "that the true manner of serving God, consisted in following Him, in walking after Him without any support of consolation, of feeling or of light, but that of pure and naked faith. He has often told me that he never staid to consider, whether he enjoyed consolation, or was overtaken by desolation; when our Lord inspired him with pious sentiments, he received them with simplicity; if He did not visit him in that way, he supported the privation with patience; but the truth is, he usually experienced very great interior sweetness.

His method in prayer was to keep himself humble, little and debased before God, with a singular respect and confidence." The manner in which the holy prelate recommends mental prayer as one of the leading exercises of Christian piety, leaves no doubt of his exactness in performing that duty; he however omitted it without scruple, whenever the service of God or of his neighbour demanded his attention. "Many years before his decease," continues the Mother de Chantal, "he could scarcely find time to attend to this exercise. One day I asked him, if he had performed it; he replied that he had not; but that he endeavoured always to be united to God, and that when the service of his neighbour engaged him, the best prayer was that of action and of exertion; and I can affirm without exaggeration, that his life was a continual prayer by the union of his soul with God." Bishops stand in a different situation from that of the religious and the recluse. These should live only for God, or for themselves with reference to God; and when their state does not summon them to the service of their neighbour, they ought to be more devoted to prayer, and contemplation, than to action. Bishops on the contrary are public characters, employed in the service of the Church; prayer and action must engross their attention by turns; but it would be

a dereliction of the duty of their ministry, to devote that time to prayer, which should be given to the government of their diocesses. That person cannot be said to leave God, who devotes his time to the service of the Church, which He has redeemed with His precious blood; and it may be pronounced, that there is not a better mode of prayer, than to accomplish the will of God, in whatever conjuncture it may be manifested. This was the favourite maxim of the holy prelate, and it is with this trait that the Mother de Chantal finishes the portrait of his mind. The following are her observations on the dispositions of his heart. "He had attained such a degree of perfection, that he loved, desired and saw nothing but God in all things; and he often repeated to me in confidence, that there was nothing in the world capable of disengaging him from God, or of moving his heart, so as to excite any other wish or desire but of pleasing Him." "This love of the will of God," continues the Mother de Chantal, "was proportionably excellent and pure, as this holy soul was not subject to deception, in consequence of the very clear light, which God had diffused over his faculties, by which he was enabled to discover the rising emotions of self-love, which he always repressed and destroyed with a fidelity that united him more intimately to God."

To these dispositions so holy, it would be difficult to find any thing to add; to love, to desire and see God alone in all things, to be engrossed only with a will to please Him, with endeavours to mortify the passions, and destroy self-love, are objects so exalted, that it would appear impossible to carry disengagement and purity of heart to a greater length. The Mother de Chantal however adds: "I have often heard him declare, that amidst his most imbittering afflictions, he experienced an undescribable sweetness; and that by this delightful union of his heart with God, the bitterest things seemed delicious. From this union so completely formed, proceeded those eminent virtues, that general and universal indifference amidst all the events of life. He literally reduced to practice, what he often taught in few words, a lesson but little known, but of extreme utility:*

* This memorable maxim of St. Francis of Sales, has been the subject of much invidious misrepresentation. For what objects, however sacred, were ever spared by the base passion of jealousy?

Envy will merit as its shade pursue,
But like the shadow proves the substance true.

This maxim is to be understood of that holy indifference and resignation to the Divine will amidst the various events of life, so emphatically inculcated in these words of the Lord's prayer: *Thy will be done*. The holy prelate has explained and enforced it in his twenty-first Entertainment, which the reader is requested to consult.

" Ask for nothing, desire nothing, refuse nothing." Though it is difficult to imagine by what misconception an improper meaning can be given to a maxim so holy, which expresses so clearly the continual submission and dependance of the holy Bishop in relation to God, and it appears not easy to misinterpret this indifference, which the Mother de Chantal calls general and universal; nevertheless as every thing may be perverted, it is proper to observe that the disposition recommended was not to proceed to an indifference for salvation, for the possession of God, and for those virtues which are necessary for its acquisition. This is a frightful species of impiety, of which it is not possible to suspect a man so holy, so enlightened, and so devoted to the doctrine of the Church. On the contrary, the greater indifference he manifested for earthly acquisitions, the more he asked and desired to be united to God, and to possess Him for eternity. This may be collected from all that passed during his last illness, and from many parts of his writings. From this universal indifference, this general disengagement from worldly objects, was derived the peace of his heart; that peace, which God alone can give, and which He really bestows on those only, whose passions are under subjection, whose affections are regulated and obedient to His orders, and

whose whole desires are directed to procure His glory, and to do His will in all things. This is expressly related by the Mother de Chantal of the holy prelate. "The peace of his heart," as she expresses it, "was divine; it was built on the entire subjection of his passions, and on a complete submission of his soul to the will of God."

Meekness and uprightness of heart, which always formed two leading parts of the character of the holy prelate, may be considered as necessary consequences of that Divine peace, with which his soul was filled; and this remark is not forgotten by the Mother de Chantal. "Never," says she, "did he do a single action against any one in the bitterness of his heart; for which reason, never was there observed a heart so meek, so upright, so humble, so gracious, so affable, as his; and besides this, how inimitable was the solidity and excellence of his prudence, and of his natural and supernatural wisdom." So many qualities natural, supernatural, acquired and infused, were accompanied with great modesty and a generous contempt of human applause, which concealed them in some measure, from the eyes of those, who observed them with the nicest attention. "He was," continued the Mother de Chantal, "an enemy to those mysterious airs,

and to that parade, which excites the admiration of persons, who are caught by external appearance; he shewed no singularity, none of those attempts, which attract vulgar admiration. He pursued the common track, but in a manner so extraordinary, that nothing appears to me more admirable in his life than this conduct." In forming this judgment, the Mother de Chantal clearly discovers a singular taste for true virtue. There is nothing greater in the sight of God, nothing which manifests more distinctly a desire of pleasing Him alone, than a common life supported in an uncommon manner; a studious attention to avoid that affectation, which in reality consists of human feelings; an unvaried care to shun those distinctions, those studied singularities, which are more shining than solid, and which in attracting the esteem of men, flatter that vanity so natural to human beings, and are found sufficient to destroy the most solid virtue. He who wishes to preserve his treasure, never exposes it to the eyes of men; he conceals it with care. He who wishes to be courted and admired, even he who does not seek to escape from applause, exposes his virtue to danger, and shews by that conduct alone, that his motives are not pure. Humility has ever been the most faithful attendant and the surest guardian of solid piety.

The Mother de Chantal, after giving this portrait of the mind and heart of the holy prelate, exhibits other separate traits, in order to afford a just representation of the soul of this great Bishop. "Every thing," says she, "was calm and regular in this soul: there was nothing but purity, humility, simplicity, and union with God: it was an enchanting entertainment to hear him speak of God, and of perfection; his expressions were so precise and intelligible, that he conveyed with ease the knowledge of the most delicate and intricate matters; accordingly it was found by general experience, that God had given him very peculiar talents for the conduct of souls." So many persons at the present period intrude themselves into this charge, that it would appear to demand no extraordinary talents. This was however not the sentiment of St. Gregory the Great, that enlightened Pontiff, who calls it the art of arts; nor was it the opinion of the Mother de Chantal, who requires for this sublime function a great portion of light, of discretion, of charity and a degree of patience not to be overcome by the multiplied weaknesses of the penitent. "He penetrated," continues she, "the recesses of hearts, and governed them with singular address and charity; he was indefatigable in this work, and never allowed himself any repose, till he had restored calm to troubled

consciences. In my judgment, zeal for the salvation of souls was the predominating virtue of my blessed father." She adds a circumstance, which cannot be too accurately observed, nor too closely imitated. "Often," says she, "have I seen him leave the service immediately relating to God, in order to attend to the wants of his neighbour, when the former work was not a matter of obligation. Good God! What tenderness! What sweetness! What a spirit of forbearance and of labour in the service of his neighbour! He finally exhausted his strength in the work." She could not finish the portrait better than by saying, that after the example of Jesus Christ, the Bishop of our souls and the model of pastors, he sacrificed his strength and health in the service of his neighbour. Accordingly she hesitates not to add, "that this holy prelate, was a living image of our Redeemer, and that the formation and order of this holy soul were altogether supernatural and divine." As the height of perfection, the most elevated point of sanctity, consists in a resemblance and conformity to Jesus Christ, it is by that trait that the Mother de Chantal finishes the accurate portrait which she has exhibited of the mind and heart of the holy prelate. To this representation nothing can be added; let it therefore be sufficient to observe, that from a source

so pure must necessarily be expected to flow, the waters of salutary knowledge, worthy of being proposed to the whole Church. This will appear from the elucidation of his sentiments on Christian morality, after we shall have replied to the objections of those who contend, that his doctrine is lax, and by no means conformable to the severity of the Gospel.

II.

That the doctrine and the conduct of St. Francis of Sales, cannot be charged with relaxation; that both are conformable to the rules of the Gospel.

It is not at the present period only that the doctrine of St. Francis of Sales is accused of relaxation, and his mild conduct represented as deficient in rigour towards sinners. In every age there has been a class of persons, who have blamed mildness of character, and have professed never to recognise virtue but when she appears with an austere, savage and repulsive mien. Such were the Pharisees, a race of men austere in appearance; they never could endure the meekness of Jesus Christ, and His charitable condescension towards the weaknesses of men. His conduct appeared to them deficient in rigour;

they even accused Him of a fondness for the pleasures of the table; of shewing too much complaisance to sinners and to publicans; and concealing their own secret views with the mantle of religion and of the public good, they stigmatised Him as the destroyer of the temple, of the law and of the religion of Moses. If our Redeemer, who was truth and sanctity itself, has not escaped such charges, is there any room for astonishment that they should be levelled against the doctrine and the conduct of the Bishop of Geneva? The servant and the disciple cannot expect to enjoy higher prerogatives than the master; but as the complaints of the Pharisees never injured the sanctity and the authority of the Gospel, it is hoped that the accusations adduced against the doctrine and the conduct of St. Francis of Sales, will have no other effect, than to increase the estimation in which they are held. Peter Camus, the Bishop of Belley, that able and enlightened prelate; whose life was so holy and so austere, whose doctrine was so pure, and who boasted the honour of being the disciple of the Bishop of Geneva, and of having learned from him, whatever he knew concerning the science of the Saints, and of Christian perfection, speaking of the accusations which were produced in his days against the doctrine and conduct of the prelate, shews

no hesitation in comparing them to the complaints of the Pharisees against Jesus Christ. He contends that they were dictated by the same spirit, and built upon the same motives. He says in express terms, that the enemy of our salvation, the spirit of darkness, foreseeing the injury which the writings of St. Francis of Sales would occasion to his empire, spared no pains to raise against them every species of obloquy. He assures us, that what the Devil apprehended most was, that "they would tend to undeceive the minds of men, who under pretext of an imaginary difficulty, bordering on impossibility, abandoned devotion as impracticable in the world, that is, civil and social life." He then attributes the general approbation, with which his doctrine was afterwards received, even by those who at first denied it with the greatest virulence, to a peculiar protection and blessing of God. At length speaking of the *Introduction to a Devout Life*, the work among those of the holy prelate, against which obloquy has been principally directed, he hesitates not to say, that the Divine Spirit was its primary author, and that the holy Bishop may be said to have written what was derived from that source.

To this testimony, which perhaps will not be deemed suspicious, as the learned prelate, who

gives it, was himself one of the warmest advocates for Evangelical rigour, we may add that of Alexander VII. It is to be seen in a letter which he wrote while he was yet Bishop of Nardo, to his nephew the Cardinal Bichy. Nothing can exceed the commendations, which he bestows in this performance on the person and writings of St. Francis of Sales. He conjures this Cardinal to cherish a fondness for his works, to make them the objects of his constant attention and study, to become his obedient son, and faithful imitator. On his Introduction to a Devout Life, he bestows peculiar praise. He says, that it is the best guide that can be adopted in the path of virtue; that, after God, he owes to him the correction of his manners for twenty years past; and that if he feels any good in himself, he is indebted to him for the blessing. He assures him, that he has read it again and again, that he can never keep it out of his hands, that he always discovers new perfections in the work, and that at every perusal, the writer appears to say something to his heart, which he had never before said. Finally, he exhorts the Cardinal to make it the mirror of his life, the rule and measure of his actions, of his conduct and of all his thoughts. In considering the design of the author, he says that it was not to form the hermit and the recluse; but to lead

the faithful to the height of Christian perfection, and form them to solid piety, by a gentle and easy method, admirably adapted to the various stations of life, of whatever description; he assures his kinsman, that virtue is there exhibited in its native dress, with such splendor and majesty as to attract admiration, and such beauty and charms, as to excite love. What he says of the Introduction to a Devout Life, he applies to all his other writings, and particularly to his work of the Love of God, which he styles a golden book, of which he professes to admire the thoughts and sentiments.

From the praises which he bestows on the works, he proceeds to the commendation which he gives to the author; he says, that what is the source of invariable admiration in this excellent writer is, that he proposed our Saviour to himself for a model, and that he began to practice, before he began to teach; that his first care was to follow the lessons, which he imparted to others; that those who study his writings, may be said to study his life; and that his precepts and his admonitions are more easily followed, as they are justified by his example. At length he adds, that descended of a rich and noble family, trained in a course of virtue and polite learning, in a manner suited to

his rank, he appeared in the courts of Kings and in the palaces of Princes, in the houses of private persons, in the society of his friends, in the affairs of the world, in the exercises of devotion, in a word in all the duties of the episcopal charge, with the utmost distinction and the highest character of sanctity. This portrait, which Alexander VII. exhibits of the life and character of St. Francis of Sales, a considerable time before his canonization, is a proof that the picture displayed in this history is not too exquisitely drawn ; it may not bear a perfect likeness to that which is given by many others, but for that reason it bears but a stronger resemblance to the original. What this Pontiff says of the doctrine and writings of the holy prelate, is not less worthy of observation, and every reader must immediately perceive, that we are inevitably justified in asserting, that those who charge him with laxity of principles, have either not read his writings, or have not taken the pains to examine them with attention. Chigy being raised to the Pontifical dignity, abated nothing of his esteem for the conduct and doctrine of the holy prelate; the examination which he made and commissioned others to make, increased his veneration ; in the letter which he addressed to the Nuns of Annecy after the canonization of the holy prelate, he

styles his doctrine divine; he declares that he had chosen this great Saint for his principal guide and master, as one proper to chalk out the path, in which we are to proceed during the course of this life. In the conclusion he adds, "that his salutary writings are so many flaming torches, which diffuse fire and light through every part of the Church." * The same Pope and Cardinals assembled on the business of the canonization, declare in the bull, addressed to the whole Catholic Church, that St. Francis of Sales having distinguished himself by his doctrine, had composed a great number of works, which have had a most beneficial influence on the hearts of the people and of the great, and have produced a most abundant harvest for the *Evangelical Life*. The last writer, who has favoured the public with the history of his life, and who has been so often quoted under the title of Anonymous, assures us, that before the canonization, all his works were examined, that they were observed to be replete with a peculiar unction, and that in consideration of the good they had done, and were daily producing in the hearts of the faithful, they were judged worthy to be ranked among the writings of the Fathers of the Church. After

* The bull of the canonization.

this can any man without the imputation of temerity, charge his conduct and his doctrine with relaxation? What writings were ever honoured with more unequivocal approbation? And in whom can we repose any confidence, if not in a Saint whom the Popes themselves propose to the whole Church as a safe guide, and as a master of an Evangelical life, whose salutary writings are so many flaming torches that have diffused fire and light among every part of the Church?

III.

Continuation of the same Subject.

To these observations we may add, that relaxation either with respect to doctrine or conduct, must necessarily proceed from one of the four causes which we are about to assign. The first of these is ignorance; for how can we teach others those matters, with which we are unacquainted ourselves? How can he prove a safe guide, who is himself unacquainted with the road? Ignorance therefore always has been, and ever will be, the primary source of laxity of principle. But there is yet another cause; a man may be acquainted with the maxims of the Gospel, and the salutary doctrine by which the Church

has ever regulated her sentiments and her conduct; but he may conceive a distaste for such knowledge; light may beam on the mind, but corruption and blindness may influence the heart. Who is unacquainted with the force of the passions, and of the facility with which our evil inclinations are gratified, in opposition to the light of faith? *I do not that good which I will*, says the Apostle, *but the evil which I hate, that I do*. Is there then any ground of astonishment that we should lead others astray, when we so often deviate from the straight line ourselves, with a full knowledge of our error? Counsel on those occasions is not bestowed agreeably to our judgment, but to our inclinations; we consult not our knowledge but our feelings; and hence we may be justified in assigning as the second source of relaxation the corruption of the heart, and a distaste for the maxims of the Gospel, though we possess a knowledge of them, and remain satisfied, that they are the legitimate rules of conduct. The third cause of laxity of principles, is to be sought for in private interest, or in the interests of the bodies and societies, to which we belong, and with which we are connected by the strongest ties. This case is so extremely notorious, that it is no uncommon occurrence, to observe persons, who are very enlightened and skilful, and even

exemplary in their conduct, still maintain very lax opinions, because the sentiments unfavourable to liberty, but more agreeable to truth, were opposed to their personal interest, or to the advantage of the society, with which they were connected. This partiality is carried to such lengths, that whole nations are guided in their judgment concerning things, by the interest which they have in each occurrence. How many maxims are considered in Italy as standing truths, while in France they are deemed false; truth however, is always the same; the various interests only are placed in a state of opposition. Such are the springs, which move and direct at least those opinions, which are held up to public view; it is therefore agreeable to truth to assign interest as the third source of laxity of principle. The fourth cause is a want of firmness; a degenerate mildness of character, a false compassion, bearing a resemblance to the conduct of a physician, who should suffer a gangrene to make rapid advances, in order to spare the patient the pain of an operation or of the amputation of a limb, a mortification of which is rapidly diffused over the whole frame, and terminates fatally; an event, which might have been obviated by a small share of resolution. The same consequence is observed in the moral world. It often happens, that we have not suffi-

cient resolution to distress our neighbour by rigorous but salutary advice; a false condescension, an ill judged compassion is substituted in the place of that prudent and generous firmness, which ought to form a leading trait in the character of pastors and directors of souls. Thus under false pretences relaxation is gradually admitted, and insensibly gains ground. It is in this manner that ignorance, the corruption of the heart, views of interest and a want of firmness have introduced, and daily propagate irregularity of manners and laxity of doctrine.

These observations are so consonant to truth, that if all pastors and directors of souls, all who are either engaged in teaching or writing, were enlightened and learned; if they were to possess a real taste for the maxims of the Gospel; if they made them their rule of conduct, and disregarding all ties of interest, were to display generosity and firmness, no reasons could possibly be assigned for laxity of doctrine. By this criterion are we to estimate the conduct and sentiments of St. Francis of Sales. If his doctrine is to be charged with relaxation, he must either have been destitute of knowledge, and must have neglected to obtain information on those concerns, in which he had to instruct others; or the corruption of his heart

must have hindered him from approving the maxims of the Gospel, and from making them his rule of conduct ; or interest must have gained an ascendancy over his knowledge and the uprightness of his heart ; or finally he must have been destitute of firmness, and that character of meekness, which has been so much commended, and which gained innumerable souls to Jesus Christ, must have degenerated into a weak condescension, and have induced him to prostitute his ministry, in a manner peculiarly criminal, since by the influence of false meekness, he would have deceived others, without having first deceived himself. The accusers of his doctrine have here to choose on which of these motives they intend to build their accusation.

Here the reader will be constrained to acknowledge, that St. Francis of Sales was too much impressed with the exalted dignity of the episcopal character, and too well instructed in his duty, not to have fulfilled the general obligation, by which Bishops are bound to obtain knowledge. It is well known that he was blessed with an excellent understanding and a happy memory ; it must be in the recollection of every reader, with what success he pursued his studies at Paris and at Padua, under the most distinguished masters

of his time, and with what application the celebrated father Possevinus formed him to the science of the Saints. It is not possible to forget the reputation which he acquired at Rome, in the far-famed examination, which the able Pontiff Clement VIII. made in order to ascertain the extent of his knowledge; nor can we lose sight of the intention of his successor Leo XI. to make him a Cardinal, with the view of deriving benefit from his counsels and his knowledge in the government of the Church. It was the opinion so generally entertained of his talents, that induced Henry IV. to form the design of obtaining for him a Cardinal's hat, and which engaged Lewis XIII. to offer him the Archbishopric of Paris. In a word, the conversion of seventy-two thousand heretics, a visible reformation in the lives of an immense number of Catholics, and the great collection of excellent works which he composed, demonstrate so incontestably his superiority over most of the prelates of his age, that no farther doubts can be entertained on the subject. How then are we to account for this supposed laxity of his doctrine? Are we to ascribe it to the corruption of his heart, and to assert, that he conceived a distaste for the maxims of the Gospel? But can a reproach of so injurious a tendency be produced against a Saint, who by an uncommon privilege,

preserved till the last hour of his life, the innocence and sanctity of his baptism? A Saint, who meditated day and night on the law of God, who not only made it the object of his studies, but the subject of his continual meditation, and his rule of life? Interest, the great spring of human affairs, and the bane of so many great men, cannot with any greater appearance of reason be assigned as a cause of this pretended laxity of principle. Never was a Saint less under the influence of this motive. He was known to decline pensions, which were repeatedly offered; the most splendid and the most lucrative dignities of the Church were insufficient to overcome his disinterested spirit; even presents, which might be deemed a legitimate recompence of his labour, were by him invariably refused. Never did man discover a greater propensity to give, and less inclination to receive; always ready to sacrifice even his existence for the welfare of his neighbour, he was careful to preserve his hands as clean as his heart. Saints of this character are placed beyond the reach of temptation; elevated above creatures, in the same proportion as they are subjected to the dominion of God, they would deem it a crime, not only to impair the morality of the Gospel, from any motive whatever, but even to entertain a thought to that effect. On a

point of this importance, the Saints have ever been inflexible ; and nothing could be found capable of degrading them in the estimation, which they have acquired by their eminent virtues, so as to induce them to betray from motives of human interest, their ministry and the Church confided to their care. Finally, a want of firmness cannot be assigned as a cause of this supposed laxity of the doctrine of St. Francis of Sales. It requires a firm and generous heart, to undervalue, as he invariably did, honours, riches and pleasures, and to expose his life, as he nobly did, on all occasions, whenever the duties of his ministry and the salvation of his neighbour called forth his exertions. But to confine our remarks with precision to the topic under consideration, great firmness of character is necessary not to flatter Princes, to venture to tell Kings those salutary truths, which so few persons have the courage to propose. This however, the holy prelate performed on all occasions, when an opportunity occurred ; and the saying of Henry the Great on this subject may be recollected, " that he loved the Bishop of Geneva, because he had never flattered him."

This pretended laxity of principles therefore, so hastily ascribed to St. Francis of Sales, cannot

be attributed to any want of firmness of character. What cause then can be devised? His accusers will be extremely embarrassed by their inability to find any. Let them therefore honestly acknowledge the purity of his doctrine, and its conformity to the immutable laws of the Gospel. But a clear exposure of his religious maxims will be a more convincing proof on this subject, than any thing which can be produced, in his favour. Indeed it may be asserted, that there would be a visible deficiency in the history of the life of this holy prelate, if after having recorded his actions, we were to omit a detail of his doctrine and of his sentiments on the leading articles of Christian morality. The writer considers himself peculiarly bound to undertake this task, as the Saint has composed a great number of excellent works, in which he has undesignedly drawn, as it were, an exact portrait of himself; and he thinks it unquestionably true, that St. Francis of Sales would be imperfectly known by the reader, who should learn what this great man did, without knowing what he thought, what he has said, and what he has written for the general benefit of the faithful, who compose the Church of Jesus Christ. This is peculiarly important in a life of St. Francis of Sales, as he never spoke, nor wrote but *from the abundance of his heart*, and as he taught others

that only, which he had first practised himself. This accounts for that extraordinary meekness, which always pervaded his conduct, and his writings; he knew how much easier it is to speak well than to act well, and that as the rule of our conduct is immutable, all that charity, which is inseparable from truth, could do, was to propose his lessons in that sweet and insinuating manner, which would win the heart, and which without exciting disgust, would insensibly attract it to the practice of virtue. His meekness never exceeded this boundary; an exact observer of the rules of the Gospel, he ever taught them in all their purity; and if like the Apostle he made himself all to all, in order to gain all to Jesus Christ, if like him he gave milk to the weak, he in the same manner afforded solid meat to the perfect, and preserved entire, the sacred deposite of doctrine. To the sentiments of St. Francis of Sales will be subjoined some of his actions, which have not been recorded in the history of his life, and which have been purposely reserved to this place, that the mixture of instruction and example might make a more powerful impression on the reader, and that the embellishment of historical facts might serve to establish and imprint in indelible characters those truths, which when well known, cannot fail to be generally useful.

IV.

Of the charity of St. Francis of Sales. Of the obligation under which all mankind lie of loving God. How much the holy prelate was distinguished by this virtue.

As charity is the most excellent of all virtues, it may be pronounced that she is the mother of each virtue. Without charity faith is destitute of life; hope has no foundation, and all other virtues are but fancies, which may ensure a certain share of honour during life, without producing any solid advantage for eternity. Charity makes Saints; she is the mother that has formed and fostered them in her bosom. It is charity, that has given to the Church all those great men, who have sustained her cause, and all those great examples, which she proposes even at the present day to her children, as models of their conduct and rules of their actions. But if charity has made the Saints, we may undoubtedly assert that it was the favourite virtue of St. Francis of Sales. Indeed from what source could be derived that complete disinterestedness, *that holy and humble elevation of heart*, as St. Bernard expresses it, which enabled him to rise, above what the world regards as the most splendid dignities of the Church, while he deemed himself unequal to the sacred ministry connected with

them, and unworthy of being invested with the spiritual authority with which they were attended? Who could inspire him with that invincible courage, which induced him to encounter such a variety of labours; who could confer that firmness which engaged him so often to expose his life, in order to regain to Christ that great number of souls, which heresy and schism had ravished from the fold? What was the source of this Apostolical fruitfulness, which enabled him to convert that astonishing number of Christians of both sexes, by the force of his exhortations, his prayers, and his example? What could be the fountain of these blessings but the Holy Ghost himself, the spirit of love and charity? In a word, how could he have written in a manner so forcible and pathetic on the subject of the love of God, if his soul had not been animated with its Divine flames?

To be convinced of the truth of this assertion, the reader has only to examine his admirable treatise on the Love of God, which Pope Alexander VII. styled a *golden book*. Among other things he there says,* “ that as man is the perfection of the universe, the mind the perfection of

* Treatise on the love of God. Book X.

man, and love the perfection of the mind, so charity is the perfection of love, and by consequence the end, the perfection, and the excellence of the universe." As if he had said, that this excellence consists in this circumstance, that there are creatures capable of knowing God, of loving Him, of referring every thing to His glory, and of uniting themselves to Him by love in time and eternity. Speaking then of the great and indispensable commandment of the love of God, he says,* "that it is, like the sun, imparting lustre and dignity to all the sacred laws, to all the Divine ordinances, and to all the holy writings." He adds, "that every thing is made for this celestial love, that all things are referable to it; that the commandment of the love of God is like a tree, of which consolations, exhortations, inspirations, and generally all the other commandments are the flowers, and life eternal the fruit; and that all which does not tend to eternal love, can tend only to eternal death." This draws from him the following animated and pathetic exclamation: "Alas! Lord, is it not sufficient, that you should be pleased to permit us to love you, without exhorting us to that duty, without obliging us by a positive command? But Oh! No! Divine

* Ibid.

bounty, that neither your greatness, nor our meanness might prove an obstacle, you enforce the duty by a direct order." The holy prelate was so impressed with the happiness to be found in the love of God, and with the goodness which He displays not only in permitting us to love Him, but in requiring our love under the greatest penalties inflicted by His justice; that he proceeds to exclaim, with a share of feeling, which the most ardent charity alone can inspire: "O true God! if we were enabled to comprehend * * * * what obligation should we not have to that infinite good, which not only permits, but orders us to love Him? Alas! O God! I know not whether I ought more to love your infinite beauty, than that Divine bounty which orders me to love, or your Divine bounty that orders me to love such infinite beauty. O beauty, how amiable are you to me who am favoured by such infinite bounty! O bounty, how amiable are you to communicate to me such eminent beauty!"

Peter Camus, that holy and learned Bishop, is an unexceptionable witness of the manner in which the holy prelate practised and recommended the love of God.* He assures us, that like the

* Spirit of St. Francis of Sales. Part VII.

Apostle, he exhorted all to have continual charity. He was not satisfied with the habit of that Divine virtue; he ever repeated with St. Paul, *let all your actions be done in charity*; that is, from the motive of charity, which is always to be cherished. He invariably inculcated, adds he, the lesson of the great Apostle, that what is performed without charity is useless; that without it, faith, knowledge, alms-deeds, even martyrdom by fire, will ever prove unavailing. He often said to me, continued he, that this maxim could not be sufficiently repeated, that it might be engraven on the hearts of the people. For said the holy prelate to this same Bishop, to what advantage is it to run, if we reach not the term? "O how many good works," would he exclaim, "are unavailing to the glory of God and eternal salvation, from a want of being animated and accompanied with the motive of charity! This is a point the least attended to, as if a good intention were not the soul of a good action; or as if God had promised to reward actions, which are not performed for Him." His sentiments on this subject may be seen in more detail, in his treatise of the Love of God. "Salvation," says he, "is shewn to faith, it is prepared for hope, but it is given only to charity. Faith points to the road of the promised land, like a column of

fire, which is at once clear and obscure; hope feeds us with this delicious manna; but charity conveys us thither, like the ark of alliance, that enables us to pass the Jordan, and which remains in the midst of the people, in the land promised to the true Israelites, in which the column of fire is no longer our guide, and the manna of hope no longer our food." All his works are replete with these maxims; he scarcely uttered and preached any thing else; and his mouth never spoke but from the abundance of his heart. Perhaps there never was a person, on whom the view of the bounty and perfections of God made a deeper impression. The reader recollects the melancholy situation, to which he was reduced by the dreadful trial, recorded in the first book of his life; the thought only that he was destined never to see God, and to hate Him eternally, impaired his health in a few days, and endangered his life; he was instantly re-established, as soon as the temptation vanished, and hope had gained the ascendancy of that despair, which assailed him. But if the view of God considered in Himself produced such a powerful impression on his heart, he was not less affected with His benefits; the benefit in particular of the redemption of Jesus Christ crucified, suffering and dying for us, was after God the great object of his love; and

widely differing from some modern mystics, he made His mysteries, His sufferings and death, the most sublime and tender object of his most exalted contemplation.

V.

Of the love of St. Francis of Sales for Jesus Christ.

Though all the Saints have ever loved Jesus Christ, and though it may safely be asserted, that they never became what they proved but by their union to this inexhaustible source of sanctity, it is still true, that the love of our Redeemer was ever the peculiar character of Apostolic men, as Bishops ought to be, and in general all pastors of the Church. Hence,* St. Augustine remarks, that Jesus Christ having determined to confide to St. Peter the care of His flock, makes no enquiry concerning his faith, his firmness, his vigilance, his zeal, or other qualities, which however are so necessary for the charge with which he was to be invested. He asks him only concerning the love which he entertained for Him, and prefers him before the other Apostles only after he had thrice questioned him, if his love was greater than

* Tract. 123, in Joan.

that of the others. It is unquestionable, that the dreadful obstructions which the Apostles had to encounter in the establishment of the Church, demanded on their part an ardent love to surmount the difficulties; but it is also undeniable, that though present embarrassments are by no means so great, yet they certainly do exist and are not to be overcome, but by a lively, tender, pure and disinterested love for Jesus Christ. It is on the subject of this love so necessary to all pastors, that St. Francis of Sales explains his sentiments in such a manner, as could be inspired only by the ardent charity with which he was inflamed. We have only to read his observations on this passage of the Great Apostle: *The love of Jesus Christ urges us, considering that if one died for us, therefore all are dead, and that Jesus Christ died for us, that they who live, may live no longer for themselves, but for Him who is dead and risen for them.* "The Apostle," says the holy prelate, "speaking of himself," and the same may be applied to each of us, declares, "the charity of Jesus Christ urges us." "Yes, nothing urges the human heart as much as love. If a man is beloved by any one whatever, he is impelled to shew a reciprocal affection; but if it be a man from the lower ranks of life, who is loved by a person of dignity, he feels himself more strongly

impelled by his affections; but if his admirer be a distinguished monarch, he feels himself still more powerfully urged to repay the favour. Knowing then that Jesus Christ, true God, eternal and omnipotent, has loved us so as to suffer death for us, and even the death of the cross, is it not sufficient to put our hearts under the press, to make us feel the impulse, and draw from us by a degree of violence and constraint that love, which becomes more desirable in proportion as it is stronger." These expressions of the *press*, *impulse*, *violence*, and *constraint*, shew in the clearest manner the strength of the impression made on the heart of the holy Bishop, by the incomprehensible love, which our Saviour has displayed by enduring for us the violent and ignominious death of the cross. The holy prelate continues to examine the words of the Apostle; quoted above. "It is true," says he, "that if Jesus Christ died for all, therefore all are dead in the person of this only Saviour, who died for them; and His death ought to be imputed to them, as it was endured for them, and in their behalf. But what consequence is to be drawn from this fact?" adds he. "The consequence which Jesus Christ desired should follow." And what is that? "Nothing else, than that we should be like Him, in order that, agreeably to the Apostle, those who live,

may live no more for themselves, but for Him, who is dead and risen for them." "True God!" continues the holy prelate, "how strong is this consequence when applied to love. Jesus Christ is dead for us; He has given us life by His death; we live only because He died; He died for us, to us and in us; our life therefore belongs not to us, but to Him, who acquired it by His death; we ought therefore not to live for ourselves, but for Him." * * * * He afterwards presses more forcibly this great motive of love. "Let us consider," continues he, "this Divine Saviour extended on the cross, as on an honourable pyre, where he dies for the love of us, but with a love more painful than death, and by a death more amorous than love itself. Ah! Why do we not throw ourselves in spirit upon Him, to die on the cross with Him, who has been pleased to give His life for the love of us. I will hold Him fast, ought we to repeat, and will never resign my hold; I will die with Him, and will burn within with the flames of His love; the same fire shall consume this Divine Creator, and His miserable creature. My Jesus is mine, and I am His; I belong to Him, I will live and die in His bosom; neither life nor death shall ever separate me from Him." It would be necessary to transcribe the whole treatise of the Love of God, or

rather a great part of the works of St. Francis of Sales, if we wished to record the most affecting and animated strokes, which they contain concerning the love of God, and of our Redeemer. It will therefore be sufficient to add, that the holy prelate was far from imagining, like some modern mystics, that the life of Jesus Christ, His sufferings and His mysteries, should not form the subjects of the sublimest contemplation. For besides that the chapter just cited, which contains nothing remarkable but the passages here preserved, treats professedly of extatic and supernatural devotion, he immediately after the words above inserted, concludes with these words: "In this manner is exhibited the holy ecstasy of love," that is, the soul is thrown into a state of ravishing delight, by a lively consideration of the sufferings of Jesus Christ, and by a tender union with Him. This extatic and ravishing devotion, must surely be the effect of the sublimest contemplation. Since then the view of the sufferings of Jesus Christ is capable of producing these effects, agreeably to St. Francis of Sales, who can for a moment doubt that he believed Jesus Christ crucified a suitable and necessary object of the highest contemplation? It will therefore be eternally true, notwithstanding the ill-founded fancies of some modern mystics, that Jesus Christ is the only way,

by which we can go to God, the truth which we can and ought to contemplate, and the Divine life, which should form the accomplishment of all our desires.

VI.

Of the love of St. Francis of Sales for the Church.

It is not possible to love Jesus Christ with the ardour shewn by St. Francis of Sales, without loving His spouse the Church, which He has acquired by the inestimable price of His blood; without having for her an attachment full of respect and tenderness, and without feeling an impulse to prefer the interests of this common mother of the faithful, before the dearest objects on earth. It was an inestimable happiness to the holy prelate to have been born within her pale, in a country and at a period, when the children of this holy mother left her communion with a studious emulation, and when heresy, after inundating so many states and kingdoms, triumphantly threatened Catholic countries with an universal deluge. This happiness, however great as it is, yields to the advantage enjoyed by the holy Bishop; in having been not only a child of the Church, but in being chosen by God, to be her

father and her support. It has been seen in the history of his life, that he had no sooner attained the use of reason, than he devoted himself to her service; and that he was eager to bear the marks of this dedication, by early receiving the tonsure. His studies were directed to this object; and he preserved with extreme care that purity so necessary to all ministers of the Church. Age served only to strengthen this resolution; advantageous marriages proposed and concluded, considerable establishments, the solicitations and tears of parents, whom he tenderly loved, and to whom he was unusually dear, were insufficient to divert him from his purpose. He executed his intention in defiance of every obstacle. But his object was not to lead in the Ecclesiastical state an indolent life, accompanied with greater comforts in proportion as it is removed from the trouble and agitation of the world; and in which tranquillity can be disturbed only by unruly passions, which he was ever careful to subject to the spirit, without following their fatal impressions. The dignities and revenues of the Church, which too often form the sole motive that leads so many others to that state, bore no part in his resolution. Impressed with a holy respect for Ecclesiastical functions, and with a generous contempt for all that worldly splendor with which the piety of

the faithful has surrounded the Church, he never sought those honours, he even declined them with invincible firmness; and content with the glory of serving the Church, he kept nothing in view but labour. Far did he remove from his thoughts any idea of that reward which he had merited, often at the expence of his life, which had been so frequently exposed in the cause of this holy spouse of Jesus Christ. The mission of Chablais alone, will be to all succeeding ages an immortal proof of his zeal; he undertook it at his own expence, and conducted the work for many years almost alone, supported in appearance by the authority of his Sovereign, but in reality abandoned for a great length of time to tumults, conspiracies, and to all those obstacles, which the violence of heresy is capable of raising against a single man, who was invigorated only by his own zeal and his confidence in God. As success is ever in the hands of the Almighty, and depends not on human exertions, it was sufficient for him to embark in those achievements, in order to prove the ardour of his love for the Church, and for Jesus Christ its founder and invisible governor. The immense numbers however, of heretics, who were brought to the fold, and of Catholics of all conditions, whose lives were reformed; so many establishments so piously planned, and formed with

so much discretion and wisdom; those works so full of piety, so well calculated to inspire virtue, and so supremely useful both to those who have the care of souls, and to those who are under their direction, will remain as eternal monuments of his unabated love to the Church, and of his standing purpose to live only to promote her interests.

If St. Francis of Sales loved the Catholic Church in general, he discovered not less zeal for the interests of the particular church of Geneva. Had his own judgment been followed, he would have occupied the lowest rank among the clergy. It has been seen, that the bare proposal of raising him to the episcopal dignity, proved almost fatal to his life; his profound humility discovered to him only dangers in a dignity, which excites the ambition of so many others who are destitute of his merit and virtue. Elevated as he was with extreme reluctance to this station by the orders of Divine Providence, he manifested by his conduct, that the greatest proof of being worthy of the episcopal dignity, is an eagerness to avoid it; not to seek it, indicates some share of merit; but to decline it when it is offered, is to advance a step farther. The Saints went to greater lengths; their reluctance was to be overcome by constraint

only; the holy prelate followed their example; he yielded only in the last extremity, and even reproached himself during the remaining part of his life for his facility. Had he lived longer, he would have resigned his station to some other, in his estimation more worthy of the dignity, though all the world was convinced, that his knowledge, charity and pastoral vigilance were not to be surpassed. Though his successor was a prelate of great eminence, he never attained the reputation of Francis; and even at this period, when a Bishop of Geneva receives the highest commendation, it is said of him, that *he is another Francis of Sales*. It will not be necessary to record in this place, all that this love of the Church induced him to perform; that strict residence, those laborious visits, that continual application to the least functions of his ministry; his faithful attention to admit to holy orders and benefices those persons only, who were qualified; his firmness in resisting all solicitations, and in shewing favour to merit and virtue alone; his compassion for the poor, his zeal for the salvation of souls, his charity for all the world. These parts of his character could not be discussed, without repeating what has already been related in the history of his life. But the historian of this great man cannot forbear to allude to

the disinterested manner in which he invariably served the Church; as this is the most unequivocal proof of his attachment to her interests. For as* St. Augustine remarks, it is an undoubted truth, that all those, who appear to shew an attachment to the Church, do not love this mother of the faithful. There are some, who by their services, seek only their own advantage, or the glory and gratification of power; who feed the flock of Jesus Christ not as if it belonged to Him, but to themselves; and as to such characters, it is easy to prove, that they love not Jesus Christ, nor His Church, but themselves only. *Qui hoc animo pascunt oves Christi, ut suas velint esse non Christi, se convincuntur amare, non Christum; vel gloriandi, vel domnandi, vel acquirendi, cupiditate, non obediendi et subveniendi et Deo placendi charitate.*

† The Bishop of Belley relates, that being one day engaged in conversation with the holy prelate, he could not help acquainting him with a scruple which he entertained in consequence of the little care he took of the temporalities of the Bishopric of Belley; for which he relied implicitly

* St. Aug. Tract. 123; in Joan. vers. med. tom. 9, Edit. Col.

† Spirit of St. Francis of Sales. Part X.

on the fidelity of an agent, without the slightest examination on his own part. The holy prelate, who had adopted the same plan without any scruple, asked on what ground the uneasiness of his friend was entertained? "On this ground precisely," replied the Bishop, "that it is a property which belongs not to me, but to God, who has confided it to my care, and to whom I am to give an account of its use." "Assuredly," replied the holy prelate, "you have applied to a very improper person to remove your uneasiness; for I act precisely in the same manner. It is true, I have chosen a very faithful and a very intelligent agent; but after that, I give myself no farther concern, and I have never thought of requiring of him any account." The Bishop delighted to find so illustrious a confirmation of his own conduct, asked him if he would undertake legal suits in the event of any disputes concerning the temporalities of his Church. "Unquestionably," replied the holy prelate, "if the disputes regarded property, of which I am only an administrator, and if justice were clearly on my side; but as my revenues are managed by an agent, I should leave the process in his hands. However to return to your scruple, St. Bernard will supply a satisfactory solution of the difficulty." "Accordingly," adds the Bishop of Belley, "he referred to the

sentiment of St. Bernard, which is, that good Bishops regulate their temporal concerns by the means of an agent, in whom they repose confidence, and their spiritual functions themselves; and that bad Bishops on the contrary, always eager to maintain and even increase the value of their revenues, trust to themselves only for their temporal concerns, and consign their spiritual matters to the care of their Vicars General, to the Arch-Deacons, and other incumbents of their Church, without giving themselves any farther trouble, than barely to comply with stated forms, and without examining, whether they satisfy the duties of their charge." "This preposterous conduct," continued the holy prelate, "is not pardonable; for if Bishops have under them pastors of the second order, to relieve them in a part of their charge, by the order of the Church that calls them to share the pastoral solicitude, how much more forcibly are they summoned to repose confidence in faithful administrators for the management of their temporal concerns, and thus be enabled to devote their time to study, to preaching, to prayer, to the administration of the sacraments, and to other episcopal functions." To speak in this way with feeling, and to act agreeably to this impression, may be pronounced to be a sure proof of the love of the Church; whoever thinks and

acts in another manner, loves himself only, and seeks exclusively his own interest. But what must ever be considered as an irrefragable argument of his ardent love for his church of Geneva, is his constant fidelity and unshaken firmness never to leave it, in opposition to every entreaty and proposal that might be made. The Bishop of Belley, speaking of his refusal of the coadjutorship of Paris, says that one of the strongest reasons which influenced him on that occasion was, that he thought it improper to abandon a poor spouse, in order to gain one crowned with greater riches. The same Bishop, speaking of the offer made to Francis by Henry IV. of a rich Bishopric in France, informs us, that he replied to his Majesty in very grateful terms, observing at the same time, that Bishoprics were not to be estimated by their revenues, but by the superior services which they enabled the incumbents to perform for God and His Church; in which particular, his church yielded to none. Thus the poverty of his church, the labour and fatigue necessarily to be encountered in serving it, which would have appeared to others sufficient grounds to leave it, contributed to detain him in his situation; an undeniable proof of the greatness and excellence of his love for it, since no stronger

evidence of real love can be produced, than when the agent shews his attachment without prospect of gain, and even in opposition to his own interest.

VII.

Of faith and confidence in God; how much St. Francis of Sales excelled in these two virtues.

The faith of the Patriarchs, of the Prophets and of the just of the Old Testament, so much commended in the Holy Scripture, was not only that infused virtue, which distinguishes us from the infidel, and which enables us to believe without the smallest doubt, whatever it has pleased God to reveal to us. It was besides a perfect confidence in His promises, which invigorated their hope in the midst of the greatest dangers, even when their situation appeared desperate. It was thus that Abraham, prepared to sacrifice his son, and had no doubt that a numerous posterity would spring from him; and that Daniel exposed to the hungry lions, believed that God would deliver him from death, which appeared inevitable. St. Francis of Sales was equally distinguished by these two virtues; the Mother de Chantal, who knew him well, has not failed to

remark this circumstance. She assures us, that she recognised in him a perfect faith, which exposed clearly to his view all the truths of religion; that he perceived God in all things; and that like another Abraham, he walked continually in His presence, full of respect and confidence, expecting nothing but from Him, and not even desiring any thing but from the same source. He was so persuaded, that His Providence watches over all things, and that it conducts them to their end by ways, which though imperceptible, are not less sure, that he completely undervalued human prudence, in comparison of that infinite wisdom, which never abandons those, who entrust themselves to its guidance. This conviction animated his confidence; and as the Mother de Chantal assures us, never had he fairer hopes of success, than when he was left to no other support, but that of Providence.

* The Bishop of Belley has preserved a conversation which he had with the holy prelate on the subject. He began by complaining to St. Francis of the weight of the episcopal dignity, and told him, that he was completely overpowered with its duties; he declared, that had he pre-

* Spirit of St. Francis of Sales. Part II.

viously known, the dangers to be encountered, he should never have undertaken such an office. He added, that the council of Trent had with reason called it a burden, dreadful even to angels, and that he experienced daily, how much reason St. Gregory had to say, that *the conduct of souls was the art of arts*. The holy prelate, who was of the same opinion, but who was unwilling, by adding to his discouragement, to deprive the Church of a Bishop of his merit, replied with his usual mildness, that he did not see that the patience of his friend had been subjected to any extraordinary trial; that he had, as it were, but a small garden to cultivate, and a garden perfectly free from the thorns and brambles of heresy. "You would," continued he, "assume a far different style of complaint, if you had the painful task of governing a diocese so extensive as mine, which is not only filled with heretics, but where exists the fruitful and unhappy source,* from which error, is diffused to the neighbouring states; if you were like myself, always in apprehensions from within, in a state of vigilance against external enemies, and incessantly employed in planting and in purifying the soil;" "this," added he, "may be termed a burden, dreadful

* The city of Geneva.

even to angels." "It is true," answered the Bishop of Belley, "that there is no comparison between my diocese and yours, either with respect to extent, or to the difficulties which are found in the general administration of our concerns; but there is still less room for comparison between the Bishops who govern; and besides, if you are much oppressed with labour, you have considerable assistance; for it is my opinion, that in the whole compass of the territories of France, there is not a diocese better regulated than yours, and more amply furnished with good ecclesiastics and excellent pastors." "I agree," replied the holy prelate, "that God, who is goodness itself, proportions His graces to our wants, and enables us to derive advantage from our tribulation; otherwise, had He not left this slender portion of religious seed to fructify, should we not be in the situation of Sodom and Gomorrah? notwithstanding we cease not to pour forth our lamentations on the banks of this great river, which issues from our Babylon, and we have no other consolation, but what is derived from the pious hope, that the Father of lights will one day disperse the darkness which surrounds us; and that after a night of error, he will display the *orient from on high*, on these poor people, who have so long been seated in the shadows of death."

"I feel it a duty," replied the Bishop of Belley, "which I owe to the Church and to you, to participate in your feelings; but however it may be asked, what have you to do with those, who are out of the Church, and who remain in voluntary error? Those who remain to you, shew so much docility, that, as St. Paul expresses it, they constitute your joy and your crown in the Lord."

"Indeed," replied the holy prelate, "I will now take you at your word, and ask, whether your flock cannot be said to shew as much docility as mine? Why then do you not make them your joy and your crown, agreeably to your own advice?" As the Bishop of Belley's name was John Peter, he applied to him those words of the Gospel: *Simon son of John, if you love me, feed my sheep.* "And believe me," added he, "you cannot shew your love of God in a more effectual manner, than by remaining in the station in which He has placed you, and by bestowing your application on the duties of your charge." "At least," continued the Bishop of Belley, "you cannot deny that the episcopal dignity is a weighty charge both for you and for me." "It would be insupportable," replied the holy prelate, "if we were to bear it ourselves; but it is a yoke of which our Lord is willing to bear a part, and thus alleviates the whole, since He bears ourselves together with

our burdens." "But to close the enquiry," resumed the Bishop, "are you not alarmed at the account of so many souls, that you have to give to the just Judge?" "Assuredly," replied the holy prelate; "but this just Judge is rich in mercy towards all who invoke Him; we have to repose implicit confidence in Him, and to cherish sentiments worthy of His infinite bounty. He remits a debt of a thousand talents on the least entreaty which is made to Him; we must serve Him with fear; but while we tremble, we are still to rejoice as the Apostle directs; that humility which discourages, and destroys confidence in God, is not of the proper kind."

The same Bishop of Belley relates, that as he was one day conversing with him on the same subject of confidence in God, he asked him what was to be done to attain a perfect distrust of ourselves. "Place your entire confidence in God," replied the holy prelate. The Bishop answered, "that he was well aware, that all disorders were to be removed by contrary remedies; but he wished to be informed, by what means we were to acquire diffidence in ourselves, and perfect confidence in God." "These two things," replied the holy prelate, "are like the scales of a balance; the elevation of one is necessarily connected with the

depression of the other; the more we have of diffidence in ourselves, the greater is our confidence in God; the less we possess of confidence in God, proportionably inconsiderable is our distrust in our own powers; and if we have no sort of confidence in our own strength, we may be assured that our hopes centre completely in God. Hence those who depend on political sagacity, the wise and prudent of the world, place but small reliance on Divine Providence." "But," replied the Bishop, "can I not attain a complete distrust of myself, by the distinct knowledge which I have of my misery, and of my nothing, without confiding in God?" "No," replied the holy prelate, "if, as the Apostle expresses it, charity has taken a deep root in your heart; for without this virtue, which is the root and foundation of all others, the distrust which you might have of yourself, would neither be Christian, nor supernatural; true distrust of ourselves, which is a fundamental virtue in the composition of a Christian, is a disposition of an active and courageous nature. It enables us to say with the Apostle: *It is not I who act, but the grace of God, which is in me.* Without this necessary virtue, I can do nothing, not even entertain a good thought; with it I can do every thing, because that which is impossible to man, is very

easy to God, who can do whatever it pleases Him, without the possibility of experiencing any resistance. Jesus Christ exhorted us to this confidence when He said: *have confidence in me, for I have conquered the world*: and David had said before Him, *those who confide in the Lord, are like Mount Sion, unmoveable*." Thus did the holy prelate express his confidence in God; but his conduct conveyed a still stronger expression of his feelings. Never was he observed to yield to discouragement, or to despondency, with respect to any concern, which he had undertaken for God. Possibly success did not on all occasions correspond with his expectations; but even then,* as the Mother de Chantal assures us, he was always calm and content, because he sought only the glory of God, which is invariably promoted by the execution of His will. Fully resigned to that, he preserved a holy indifference; and nothing was capable of disturbing the peace of his heart; an unequivocal proof, that he had subdued self-love, and that he lived and acted only for God. Thus he could say with St. Paul: *I no longer live, but it is Jesus Christ, who liveth in me*.

* Deposition of the Mother de Chantal.

VIII.

Of prayer; how much the holy prelate recommended it to all Christians; his sentiments on this subject.

Prayer of all duties to be performed, naturally arises from a distrust in ourselves, and confidence in God. Indeed who is capable of knowing and feeling misery so general and so extreme, as that of man, his blindness, his weaknesses, his repugnance to do good, his propensity to evil, which bears him away in defiance of his resolutions; in a word, who can view that series of evils with which he is surrounded, without feeling an impulse to recur by the means of prayer, to that sovereign and beneficent Being, without whose assistance he can do nothing, as with the aid of His all-powerful grace, he is equal to any undertaking? It is true, that the infinite distance between God and ourselves, our crimes that have so often irritated His justice, and which would have exhausted any other goodness but His, might dishearten us from making our addresses, or lead us to despair of the success of our supplications; but He has been kind enough to animate our confidence, and He directs us in terms so urgent to have recourse to Him in our wants, that it is equally impossible either that He should be unable or unwilling to

afford us succour. To the performance of this indispensable duty of Christian piety, St. Francis of Sales urged persons of all descriptions, the perfect and the imperfect, the-worldling and the recluse; some, in order to enter on the road of perfection, and others, that they might persevere in the path. With this view he says, that * “prayer enlightens our understanding with Divine light, and that it exposes our will to the heat of celestial love; that there is nothing which so purifies our mind from its errors, and our will from its evil affections; that it is the water of benediction, which gives, if it may be so expressed, a verdant and flourishing appearance, to the plants of our good desires, which cleanses our souls from their imperfections, which moistens our hearts, and extinguishes that thirst, which is occasioned by their irregular emotions.” What he says of prayer in general, he particularly applies to mental prayer and meditation; which he recommends with peculiar earnestness. But he assigns not as the object of mental prayer, dry, barren and abstract ideas, which engross the mind without affecting the heart, and without producing a regular method of life, and reformation of manners. He requires us to meditate frequently

* Introduction, p. 2. c. 1.

the doctrine, the life, the sufferings of Jesus Christ: he assures us, * "that by often looking on Him by meditation, our souls will be filled with Him, and that we shall be insensibly accustomed to form our actions by His model." He says, that we are in a particular manner obliged to employ our minds in meditation on Him, as He is the light of the world; that it is in Him, by Him and for Him, that we are to be enlightened; that He is the fountain of Jacob, that cleanses our defilements; that as little children, by hearing their mothers speak, and lisping after them, learn their language; so we, by adhering to our Saviour by meditation; by observing His words, His actions and His affections, shall learn with the assistance of His grace, to speak, to act and to will like Him. He deems this advice so important, that he says in express terms, that we are to *stop there*; "and believe me," continues he, "we shall never be able to go to God the Father, but by this gate. For as the glass of a mirror would not bound our sight, if quick-silver were not placed on the back of it; so the divinity could not be contemplated by us, if it were not joined to the sacred humanity of our Saviour, whose life and death form the best proportioned, the most re-

* Ibid.

tional, and the most useful subject we can choose for our ordinary meditation." But fearing it might be supposed, that he indirectly referred to some extraordinary mode of meditation, which should exclude the subject of Jesus Christ, he adds these beautiful words: "Our Saviour calls himself not without reason, the bread which descended from heaven; for as bread is eaten with all sorts of food, so our Saviour ought to be meditated, considered, sought after in all our actions, and in all our prayers."

It might be contended, that St. Francis of Sales, having composed the Introduction to a Devout Life, for persons in the world, and for those who are beginning to enter on the road of perfection, as the title of Introduction seems to imply, he has not undertaken to speak of the prayer of the perfect. But his comparison of bread, which is to be eaten with all sorts of meat, destroys this supposition; and independently of this, he repeats the same maxims in the Entertainments which were made for more perfect souls. He even adds, that these sentiments are the rules left by the Holy Fathers, and that we should studiously walk in their steps. "But," continues he, "some have not been satisfied with what these venerable guides have left, and have discovered other imaginary

methods ; these we are not to adopt in our plans of meditation ; for such practices might be detrimental." As there is nothing more useful than prayer, there is likewise nothing more subject to illusion, and in which it is easier to fall into errors, when we are not directed by good guides. There is no danger of losing our way in the great roads ; the secret paths only lead to the precipice. Such are those obscure traditions, unknown to the Church for so many ages ; those private methods, of which it is asserted, that the ordinary pastors are not the proper judges. It is nearly the same with prayer, as with faith ; whatever is most eminent, whatever has been received generally, always, and in all places, is the best and should ever be followed ; singularity never fails to be dangerous, and at best bears but a suspicious appearance. But though the holy prelate prefers mental prayer to vocal, he fails not strongly to recommend the practice of both ; and he gives the preference to vocal prayer, when it is commanded ; as in the case of the recitation of the Divine office, with respect to ecclesiastics. Independently of the circumstance of obligation, he gives the preference to mental prayer ; he requires that the devout person be exact in it, that an hour be employed in that exercise every morning, or in the afternoon, if the time cannot be spared sooner.

Should this exercise be prevented by the hurry of affairs, his advice is, that this defect should be repaired by short and fervent prayers, by secret elevations of the heart to God, which nothing is capable of hindering, or by the reading of some moving book of piety. In a word, the obligation of prayer appeared to him so indispensable, that he advises even persons of the world, to impose on themselves some penance, as often as they fail in the duty, lest a disgust for prayer should gain an ascendancy, and the habit of not praying should insensibly prevail. Such was the practice which the holy prelate proposed to Christians of every description. As to his own habits, he carried matters to greater lengths. When the duties of his charge permitted him, he devoted every day several hours to prayer; and when he was debarred from this practice, he had recourse to frequent elevations of the heart to God; and in this he was so punctual, that the Mother de Chantal assures us, that his life was a continual prayer by the union of his soul with God.

IX.

Of purity of heart; how much St. Francis of Sales excelled in this virtue, and to what lengths he thought it should be carried.

If prayer is a duty so indispensable for all Christians, it may be asserted, that purity of heart, which becomes so necessary in order to render it efficacious, is not of inferior obligation. *If I perceive, said David, iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.* We must then possess great purity of heart to pray well; and this is the first disposition which the holy prelate demands, in order to approach to God by prayer, as Jesus Christ lays it down as a necessary condition, in order to enjoy God in heaven. *Blessed are the pure of heart, for they shall see God.* St. Francis of Sales does not indeed require perfect purity as a preliminary condition to pray; but he requires the Christian to aim at it, and to labour to acquire it. He makes it consist in the following articles.* He requires in the first place, that the soul should be free not only from all mortal sin, but even from all affection to sin; in the same manner as the true Israelites not only left Egypt,

* Introduction. Part I. c. 5. 6. 7. et seq.

but divested themselves of all affection, which they might have entertained for what they had left in that country. This is what he calls the first step towards the purgation of the soul, that is, purity of heart. The second consists in having no affection to venial sin. On this subject, he justly remarks, that it is not possible in this life to be entirely free from venial sin, at least for any length of time; but that it is possible, and that it becomes a duty to have no affection to it; or as he expresses himself, "We must not voluntarily cherish the will of persevering in any sort of sin." The reason which he assigns is, "that venial sin, however slight, displeases God, though it does not displease Him to that degree, as to induce Him to deprive us of eternal salvation; and if venial sin is thus displeasing to Him, the affection which we may entertain for it, must be assuredly displeasing, because it is nothing else than a resolution wilfully to displease His Divine Majesty." If thus to displease God by any act, is contrary to true purity of heart, to take a pleasure in displeasing Him, is still more opposite to that disposition. He adds, "that these affections to venial sin are entirely contrary to devotion, as an affection to mortal sin is contrary to charity; that they weaken the powers of the mind; that they

prevent Divine consolations; 'that they open the door to temptations; and that though they do not kill the soul, they render it extremely feeble.' Finally, nothing displeases God, but that which defiles the soul; and all that sullies the beauty of the soul is contrary to purity of heart. The holy prelate is not satisfied with this degree of perfection; he carries the purity of the heart even to the act of retrenching all affection to dangerous and useless things; such are games and diversions, even those that are innocent and permitted. He therefore asserts on this subject, that there is no harm in innocent amusement, but *that it is unquestionably hurtful to take an affection for it*; that our hearts were not formed to be occupied with such vain and ridiculous affections; that these attachments possess a place which should be held by good impressions, and that they prevent our application to laudable pursuits. He refers to the example of the Nazareans, who not only abstained from wine, and all inebriating liquor, but even from grapes and verjuice; and he concludes from this instance, that we are to deprive ourselves not only of all that immediately affects the purity of the heart, but of every thing capable of impairing it. "The heart of man," says he, "by loading itself with these useless, superfluous and dangerous affections, is unquestionably pre-

vented from running with swiftness and with facility after its God, which is the essence of devotion." This desirable perfection consists in having the heart pure and disengaged from the things of the world, in order to be engrossed wholly with God.

It must be allowed, that a soul thus cleansed from all these affections, has attained a considerable share of purity; the holy prelate however requires farther advances; he demands that this purity be carried so far as to retrench evil inclinations, however natural. "We have," says he, "certain inclinations natural to us, which, as they did not originate in our personal sins, are not properly either mortal or venial faults, but are called imperfections; and the acts are styled defects and failures." These are to be retrenched and corrected, if we wish to possess perfect purity of heart. But lest it should be imagined, that he speaks of vicious inclinations, that lead to evil, he produces the instance of St. Paula, who, according to the account of St. Jerom, was so addicted to melancholy, that on the death of her husband or her children, she was perpetually in danger of dying of grief. "This was," says the holy prelate, "an imperfection, and not a sin, since it was against her intention and against her

will." However as such and similar inclinations are real defects, which impair the purity of the heart, the holy prelate requires, that efforts should be continually made to remove them.* He proceeds still farther; for he maintains that we are to retrench even desires, not only such as would be dangerous, but even those that are useless and superfluous, or those which regard things either distant, or which are not in our power, or which, however laudable, are not suitable to the station, in which we are placed by God. "No," says he, in express terms, "I would not have devout persons wish for a more excellent understanding, or a better judgment than they possess; since these desires are vain, or at least hold the place of the desire, which each one ought to have to cultivate the gifts he has received. Let them not even desire to have better means of serving God, than they possess; but faithfully employ what is given." "Now this," adds he, "is to be understood of the desires, in which the heart is engaged; for as to simple wishes, they are not hurtful, provided they be not too frequent." The holy prelate, after purifying the heart by the means which have been specified, requires that every effort be made to adorn it with virtue. Indeed purity of

* Introduction. Part III. c. 37.

heart, does not consist in this void, occasioned by what the Saint calls the first purgation; a situation not more consonant to grace than to nature, but in the plenitude of those virtues, which are adapted to all states in general, or of those which are peculiar to each one's situation in life. Accordingly after having spoken on the subject of prayer, and on some other exercises of Christian piety, which are calculated to obtain from God this purity of heart, he proceeds to treat of the different virtues, and gives excellent advice on the method of attaining them. But his manner by no means resembles that of the philosophers, who on these subjects frequently furnished precepts, which they never reduced to practice; but it is always tender, affecting and practical; a manner which is to be learned only in the school of Jesus Christ. The justness and solidity of his mind appear in all he says, but the goodness of his heart is still more conspicuous; he never taught but what he had first practised himself.* The Mother de Chantal assures us, that he had attained such a degree of purity of heart, as to love, to desire, to see nothing but God in all things; and that he was continually engaged in repressing the smallest

* Letter of the Mother de Chantal to Father John of St. Francis.

emotions of self-love. To souls purified in this manner, or at least to such as labour to attain this purity of heart, the holy prelate allows the frequent use of the sacraments, as he says in express terms,* in that passage where he treats of frequent communion. After this discussion, those who have accused his doctrine of relaxation, will perhaps acknowledge, either that they have not examined it with sufficient attention, or that they never rightly understood it.

X.

*Of external humility, or of the contempt of honours.
Rules of conduct given by the holy prelate to persons
invested with dignity.*

The holy Bishop of Geneva proceeding to treat the subject of humility, divides it into exterior and interior. He repeats after St. Bernard, that to receive the grace of God into our souls, we must strip them of our own glory, and in some measure of ourselves: this can be performed only by humility, which he styles the mother and guardian of virtues. By exterior humility, the holy prelate understands that, which regulates the

* Introduction. Part II. c. 20.

exterior ; and by interior humility, he means the humility of the heart, which affects the sentiments we are to entertain with respect to God and to our neighbour. He proceeds to observe, that there are advantages on which we daily value ourselves, and yet that this vanity is extremely ridiculous. These advantages are, either those that are not in us, or those that are in us, but do not belong to us ; or those that are in us and belong to us, but which are of such trifling moment, that they do not deserve to be considered, and should not elevate us in our own estimation above others. As instances of the advantages which are not in us, he produces those of rank, the favour of the great, the esteem of the public. And true it is, that these advantages are not in us, but either in our ancestors, or in the esteem of others. The advantages which belong to us, but are not in us, are equipages, the splendor of dress, furniture and all such exterior goods, which are indeed our property, but add nothing to our merit. For truly the possession of these advantages, gives no increase either to our wisdom, to our prudence or our virtue, nor does it enhance any of those qualities, which render us better men or more valuable in society. The goods which belong to us and are in us, are, for instance, beauty which soon withers ; knowledge, which is extremely

limited, and but too frequently directed to vain and useless objects. We value ourselves, continues the holy prelate, on all these accounts without reason; as these advantages, so far from rendering us estimable, frequently expose us to ridicule, and give birth to a foolish vanity, that renders us contemptible to men, and hateful to God. "True merit," adds the holy prelate, "is known like true balm. Balm is tried by being distilled into water; if it sink to the bottom, it is esteemed valuable and precious; but it is of the contrary description, if it remain on the surface. Thus to know, if a man be really estimable, learned, noble, generous; we must ascertain, if these advantages be built on humility and modesty; in that case, they will be truly valuable: but if they rise to the surface, and are ostentatiously exposed to public view, they may be accounted deceitful advantages, in the same proportion in which they are shewn. Even virtues themselves, and the fairest qualities which adorn human nature, should they be fostered in pride and vanity, are but a vain appearance; they are really destitute of health and solidity." He then advises the faithful Christian not to shew too delicate and formal an attention to rank, precedence and title; "for," says he, "besides the inconvenience of exposing ourselves to enquiries

and examinations, which will not always succeed to our wishes, nor justify the pretensions we assume, we render ourselves contemptible in manifesting too much esteem for objects by no means estimable." He adds, that the search and love of virtue contribute to render us virtuous; but that a passionate attachment to honours, exposes us to reproach and contempt. "Minds well formed," says he, "are not amused with the trifles of honour, of rank and respect; they have more important objects to attend to; it indicates a low and indolent mind to be engaged in such concerns; he who can obtain pearls, will not load himself with shells; and those who aspire to virtue, betray a disregard for honours." He however acknowledges, that every person may keep his rank, and even maintain it without violating humility, *provided*, says he, *that be done with ease and without contention*. He moreover owns, that those who are invested with public dignities, ought not to neglect the rank and the respect due to them; that there are even important occasions when such neglect would be dangerous; he says, that in this, *every one ought to maintain what belongs to him*; but as he believes that persons ought not to be passionately attached to such niceties, he requires, that when the support of rank is justified with the best reasons, the

claim should be made with much prudence, discretion, charity, and politeness.

XI.

Of interior humility which resides in the heart. Sentiments of the holy prelate concerning true and false humility.

The exterior humility, of which we have been speaking, is that which regulates the actions and the exterior conduct; and interior humility is that which forms the sentiments, the inclinations and desires. But as virtue of whatever description, resides totally in the mind and in the heart, there is, in strict propriety of speech, no other humility, but what is interior, which consists in the sentiments of the mind, and in the affections of the heart. Accordingly the holy prelate, speaking of the rules of conduct which we have recorded, says, that it is less humility that dictates them, than the prudence and discretion which should accompany all our actions. As to interior humility, which teaches us to know ourselves, and not to value ourselves beyond our trifling deserts, he says in the first place, that it is not a sentiment of humility, to be unwilling to reflect on the benefits of God, from an apprehension of flattering that

natural pride, which every object tends to enkindle, and which often gains fresh strength from the means employed to repress it; according to him, false humility alone can inspire such a sentiment. "For," says he, "since the true method of attaining the love of God, is the consideration of His benefits, the more we become acquainted with those benefits, the more we shall love Him; and as particular favours have a more affecting influence than those that are common to others; so they ought to be more attentively considered. Certainly nothing is more calculated to humble us before the mercy of God, than the multitude of His benefits; and nothing can so humble us before His justice, as the multitude of our sins. Let us consider what He has done for us, and what we have done against Him; and as we examine our sins in detail, let us review the peculiar favours which He has bestowed." "No!" continues he, "we are not to fear, that the knowledge of what He has placed in us should give birth to pride, provided we be always attentive to this consideration, that what is good in us, is not from us; agreeably to the words of the Apostle, *What have we that we have not received: and if we have received, why do we glory, as if we had not received.*" "On the contrary," adds the holy prelate, "the lively consideration of the graces

received, renders us humble, because knowledge begets gratitude.

He however acknowledges, that there are persons who have so strong a bias to vanity, and in whom self-love has taken so deep a root, that the consideration of the peculiar benefits bestowed on them by God, is apt to give new strength to their natural pride. The advice which he gives on these occasions, is not to discontinue the consideration of the benefits of God, but to review at the same time our multiplied instances of ingratitude, our imperfections and our miseries. "If we consider," says he, "what we did when God was not with us, we shall easily perceive that what we do, when He is with us, is not from us; we shall enjoy the pleasure of the benefits, but we shall refer all the glory of them to God alone, because He alone is the sole author of them; in the same manner as the Blessed Virgin acknowledges that God has done great things for her; but it is only to humble herself, and to give glory to God." "My soul," says she, "glorifies the Lord, and my mind is ravished with joy in God my Saviour, because He has regarded the meanness of His handmaid. The Almighty has done in me great things, and Holy be His name." He then reproves those, who in their discourse, affect a tone

of humility, and speak of themselves with contempt. He places this affectation to the account of false humility.* "We should be extremely sorry," says he, "to be taken at our word, and to be reputed such as we represent ourselves to be; on the contrary, we pretend to fly and conceal ourselves, that others may run after us and seek for us; we feign a wish to be the last, and to be seated at the bottom of the table, but it is only to ascend to the top with more glory." After having ascribed this affectation to false humility, he draws the character of true humility. "True humility," says he, "does not affect the appearance of what it is. It desires to conceal not only its other virtues, but it is eager above all things to conceal itself; and if it were permitted to lie, to dissemble, and to scandalize our neighbours, it would exhibit acts of arrogance and haughtiness, in order to conceal itself under these appearances, and to remain unknown. "Either let us not utter," says he, "these words of humility, or let us repeat them with a true interior spirit, conformably to what we speak; let us never cast down our eyes, but while we humble our hearts; let

* This most useful passage is strongly recommended to the attention of the reader. For false humility, like false money, is too much in circulation.

us not affect a wish to be in the last place, till we really desire it in all the sincerity of our hearts; and I hold," says he, "this rule to be so general, that I find no exception to it."

But as civility, which is one of the principal virtues of social life, often requires that we do and say things, which are not exactly agreeable to our secret intentions, and the sentiments of our hearts, the holy prelate proposes the difficulties that might arise on this subject, and resolves them with much precision. "Civility," says he, "sometimes requires, that we give the advantage to those who will certainly not accept it; but in this there is no duplicity, nor false humility. For in those cases, the offer of the advantage is a beginning of honour, and since we cannot give it to them entirely, there is no harm in giving to them the beginning." "The same may be said," continues he, "of certain expressions indicating honour and respect, which literally are not true; they are however sufficiently agreeable to truth, provided the heart of him who utters them, have a real intention to honour and respect the person to whom they are addressed. For though the words which we employ express our meaning rather strongly, there is no harm in using them, agreeably to received usage." He however by no

means approves those long and extravagant compliments, as contrary to sincerity, as they are remote from true civility; compliments extremely embarrassing to those who make them, more disgusting to those who hear them, and which mean nothing or mean too much. He requires, that in complimentary addresses, nothing be said, which is not conformable, as far as may be, to our real sentiments, *in order to follow*, says he, *in all and through all*, simplicity and cordial candour. Sincerity, simplicity, and candour ought, agreeably to the holy prelate, ever to accompany humility. But he goes farther; he maintains that a man truly humble, would rather that another should speak of him in contemptible terms, than perform that office himself. He requires at least, that when that happens, no offence be taken, no contradiction offered, and no complaint uttered. Humility on those occasions allows no replies; and the reason which he assigns is, that as this virtue inspires very lowly sentiments of ourselves, we ought not to be displeased, that others should speak conformably to what we think, or at least to those sentiments, which it is our duty to entertain.

He then places in the class of the affectedly humble, all those who declare, that they leave

prayer to the perfect, and who say, that as to themselves, they are not worthy of performing that exercise; as also those who protest, that they venture not to communicate more frequently from a sense of their deficiency of disposition; those who affirm that they have an apprehension of joining the ranks of the *devotées*, lest they should disgrace devotion itself; and finally those who refuse to employ the talents, which God has given them, in the service of their neighbour, under the flimsy pretext, that they are sensible of their weakness, and of their propensity to vain glory; and that they should expose themselves to ruin, by an attempt to instruct others. "All that," says the holy prelate, "is but an artifice of self-love, and a species of humility, not only false but malicious, by which blame is tacitly and disingenuously imputed to the designs of God; or at least the mantle of humility is thrown over self-love, caprice and indolence." He asserts, that when God favours us with any gift, it is a sign, that He wishes us to employ it, and that humility exacts our compliance, in performing what appears to be required of us. "The proud man," says he, "who relies on himself, has great reason not to embark in any undertaking; but the humble man is courageous in proportion as he confides not in his own strength; in the same degree in

which he believes himself weak, he becomes bold and enterprising; because he reposes all his confidence in God, who is graciously pleased to display His power in our weakness, and to raise His mercy upon the wrecks of our wretchedness." Hence he infers, that we are to employ with humility and holiness, the gifts of God, and all that our directors think proper to render us perfect. "To imagine that we know," continues he, "what we are ignorant of, is arrant folly; to affect a knowledge of that with which we know ourselves to be unacquainted, is an instance of insupportable vanity. As to me, I would not act the pedant in what I know, nor would I affect to be ignorant." He prescribes another important rule of conduct, and directs that, when charity requires it, and we are not actuated by selfishness, vanity, avarice, or any similar passion, we should then communicate to our neighbour, *with freedom and meekness*, whatever can contribute to his instruction; and that we should not withhold what is useful to him, and may administer to his consolation. "For," says the holy prelate, "*that humility*, which conceals from public view our virtues, for the purpose of preserving them more securely, will suffer them to appear, when charity requires that they be thus enhanced and brought

to perfection. For charity ought to predominate in all virtues; consequently that humility, which injures charity, is unquestionably false." He acknowledges that there would be a certain irregularity in some actions, which appear to be dictated by humility. "As," continues he, "I would not affect superior wisdom, so I would not assume the garb of folly; for if humility forbids the first extreme, simplicity and candour should prevent the other; and if vanity is contrary to humility, artifice and affectation are opposed to simplicity and candour." He adds, that if some Saints have assumed the appearance of folly, in order to render themselves contemptible in the eyes of the world, we are to admire their conduct, but not to consider it as a subject of imitation; "for to adopt this extreme," continues he, "they were actuated by peculiar and extraordinary motives, from which no one should draw a consequence for the regulation of his own conduct." He however acknowledges, that if we were to pass for fools in the eyes of the world, for having embraced the pursuit of *true and sincere devotion*, we are not on that account to relinquish our purpose, and act agreeably to the judgment of men. "In such a case," says he, "humility will give you joy, amidst your disgrace, of which the cause does not exist in you, but in those who form these perverse judgments."

XII.

Continuation of the same subject.

From the time that the Son of God has said : *Learn of me, for I am meek and humble of heart ;* this virtue, till that period so little known, is now become so necessary, that it may be styled the foundation of the spiritual edifice. This made St. Augustine say : “ Do you wish to be great ? Begin by being little. Do you intend to erect a stately edifice ? First resolve to make humility the foundation, and forget not, that the higher and more substantial the building is to be, the foundation must be proportionably deeper.” “ Our edifice,” continues he, “ must be raised to the possession of God ; let us then assign no bounds to our humility. A stately building cannot be raised on too deep a foundation.” The extreme necessity and importance of this virtue, induced St. Francis of Sales, to treat it more at length, than any other. In speaking of humility, he spoke from his heart ; it was his favourite virtue ; this occasioned these observations, “ that the highest summit of humility, consists not only in knowing our abjection, but in loving it, and in feeling a complacency in it ; “ and this,” says he, “ not from

want of courage or generosity, but with a view to exalt His Divine Majesty the more, and to value our neighbour more than ourselves." He then lays down the principle, that among the evils incident to life, some are humiliating, and others are honourable. The latter are easily supported; but it is difficult not to conceive an aversion for the former. That a religious man should be ill drest, and should suffer injuries with patience, are circumstances, which are not deemed dishonourable; but should a gentleman be in that situation, he would excite contempt. What would be considered as virtue in one instance, would be treated as meanness of spirit in the other. Patience, agreeably to the holy prelate, engages us to love the evils which God ordains; but humility alone, leads us to love the abjection with which they are attended. What the holy prelate says of evils, he applies to the different virtues. There are some virtues, which are deemed abject, and excite contempt; there are others which are honourable, and fail not to attract the esteem of mankind. Patience, meekness, simplicity, even humility, are virtues that are viewed with contempt by the world. Prudence, generosity, valour, are held in high estimation. Of the same virtue, some acts are in repute, and others undervalued; to give alms and to pardon injuries, are both acts

of charity. The world esteems the first, and slights the other. Humility, according to the holy Bishop, leads us to love not only the virtues which are viewed with contempt, but even the contempt annexed to them. He says the same of the contempt with which our good or bad actions may be followed. He only adds, that if the action be bad, we are to detest it, but to love the abjection with which it is attended, and the contempt which it brings. However, he proceeds to observe, that though we are to love the abjection which arises either from the evils which we suffer, or from those which we commit, we must nevertheless labour to remove the cause, especially in matters of consequence. "If," says he, "I have any complaint in my face, which may be attended with humiliation, I shall try to remove it, without seeking any remedy for the humiliation which has accrued. If I have done a thing which renders me contemptible, without giving offence to any one, I will forbear all apology; for though it may be a defect, yet as it brings but a transient shame, an apology can only serve to remove the humiliation; and such attempts, are contrary to true humility. But if by mistake or imprudence, I have scandalised any one, I will repair the offence by some true excuse, because in such a case, the evil is permanent, and charity obliges me to

remove it." Indeed charity sometimes requires, that we should remove our own abjection, for the good of our neighbour, who is interested in our reputation; but in such a case, if for the good of others, we hide from view what renders us contemptible, we should be careful to conceal the humiliation in our heart, for the purpose of edification. The holy Bishop having advanced this maxim, which he ever religiously observed, enquires what are the most salutary kinds of abjection. He answers this enquiry by saying, that the humiliations, which are the most advantageous to the soul, and the most agreeable to God, are those in which we bear the least part, which appear to happen by chance, or which arise from the station of life, in which Providence has placed us. The reason which he assigns is, that we did not choose them, but we took them from the hand of God; that He knows better than we ourselves, what is good for us, and that His choice is always preferable to ours. "If," continues he, "there should be a necessity of choosing, the greatest are the best; and those are deemed the greatest, which are most repugnant to our inclinations, provided they be conformable to our vocation; for to say it once for all, our choice spoils and impairs all our actions. Ah! Who will give us the grace to say with that great King; *I have chosen to be abject*

in the house of God, rather than to dwell in the tabernacles of sinners." It is thus that this great master of a spiritual life, undermines the foundations of self-love, that bane of Christian virtue; he was acquainted with its various forms; he knew that it insinuates itself into concerns, which appear to be of an opposite tendency; and this made him say, that our own choice generally spoils and impairs all our virtues.

XIII.

That the love and practice of humility are not incompatible with a reasonable regard to reputation.

Though humility obliges us to shun honours, glory, praise, and in general every thing which has a tendency to flatter our inborn pride, and to give additional strength to that vanity, from which no one is wholly free, it however allows us, agreeably to the advice of the wise man, to pay a rational regard to our reputation. The reason which the holy prelate assigns is, that though humility does certainly not admit, that we are possessed of those eminent and distinguished qualities, which confer commendation and throw a glory round the agent, it still is compatible with that degree of common probity, that share of integrity, which

renders us irreproachable in the eyes of men. "Humility," says the holy prelate, "does not prevent us from recognising in ourselves, and consequently from desiring reputation." "It is true," continues he, "that humility would despise every degree of credit, if charity did not need it; but because it is one of the foundations of civil society, and without it we become not only useless, but even hurtful to the public by the scandal which is given, charity requires, and humility admits the demand, that we should value it, and preserve it as a precious treasure." It is not therefore to indulge in self complacency, and to be honoured by men, that we should love and preserve our reputation, but in order to be useful to our neighbour, and much more, that God may be glorified. *Let men, says our Redeemer, see your good works, that they may glorify your Father who is in heaven.* The holy prelate discovers another reason for permitting us to cherish and preserve our reputation. He compares it to the leaves of the tree, which of their own nature are not valuable, but become necessary both to embellish and preserve the tender fruit. In the same manner reputation is but a fleeting object; but it is rendered extremely useful, not only for the embellishment of life, but for the preservation of our virtues, particularly of those, which are yet tender,

and which have not attained their full maturity. • The fear of losing the reputation which has been acquired, renders us attentive to do nothing which can impair it, but to act in such a manner as to preserve and increase the treasure. It is true, that as we ought to love virtue, only because it renders us agreeable to God, who ought to be the object and end of all our actions, the love of God should ever prove a sufficient incentive, to animate us to preserve the virtues which have been attained, and to add to the stock; but as we are yet weak, and need support, the care of our reputation is undoubtedly one of the most effectual means, to enable us to persevere in the course of virtue.

But though the holy prelate acknowledges, that it is lawful to cherish and preserve reputation, he forbids all excess of eagerness and delicacy on the subject. "For," says he, "those who are too tenderly delicate in the care of their reputation, resemble those persons, who perpetually have recourse to medicine in every slight indisposition. Such persons, anxious to preserve their health, entirely destroy it; and those who are exquisitely nice about reputation, completely forfeit it; for they become capricious, punctilious and insupportable; faults, which raise enemies and excite calumny." "Dissimulation," continues he, "and

contempt of calumny and of injuries, is ever a more effectual remedy than resentment, quarrels and revenge; contempt causes the evil to disappear; by shewing displeasure, we seem to avow it; * * * * calumny injures those only who are discomposed by its venom." He proceeds to observe, that an excessive fear of losing reputation, implies distrust, with respect to its foundation, which is real probity and integrity of conduct; that those who possess a truly Christian soul, usually despise the sallies of injurious tongues; but those who are weak, labour under perpetual embarrassment and disquietude; that he who wishes to enjoy reputation with all, usually loses it with many; and that such persons deserve to forfeit it, who desire to be honoured by characters, that are infamous and sullied with crimes. "Reputation," continues he, "is nothing but a signal, which points to the abode of virtue; virtue ought therefore on all occasions, to have the preference. For which reason, if it be said that you are a hypocrite, because you pursue the path of devotion; if you are deemed mean spirited, because you have pardoned an injury, pay no regard to such decisions; for besides that, persons who reason in this manner, are usually very degraded characters, it would become a duty, not to abandon virtue, nor leave its fair path, even at the hazard of repu-

tation. The reason of this is, that we are to prefer the fruit before the leaves, that is, spiritual blessings before exterior show." "We must," adds he, "jealously guard, but by no means idolize our reputation; and as it is a duty not to offend the eyes of the good, so we are never to gratify the wishes of the wicked."

But though the holy prelate directs us not to idolize our reputation, he however acknowledges, that we are to make great sacrifices to preserve it; that dangerous friendships, suspicious connexions, vain conversations, useless occupations and such objects are to be relinquished, not only because they are hurtful to salvation, but likewise because they might prove injurious to our reputation, which is more valuable than the vain satisfaction, that such useless pursuits can bring. "But," adds he, "if your exercises of piety, your advancement in devotion; your care to pursue the road to heaven, should excite murmurs, complaints and calumnies, you are to despise these false judgments; they may tarnish your credit for a time; but it will soon revive with additional lustre, as the vine which has been pruned, and hair which has been cut, soon appear more beautiful, and receive a speedy increase." He requires us when we are calumniated, to direct our eyes to Jesus

Christ, the author and finisher of our faith; to copy that invincible patience, which permitted Him not to reply to the blasphemies, and to that series of false accusations, with which His enemies laboured to darken His character. "Let us walk on," says he, "in His service, with confidence and simplicity, but likewise with wisdom and discretion; He will be the guardian of our reputation; and if He permits it to be taken away, it will only be for the purpose of conferring more lasting credit, or of giving us the advantage of a holy humility; a slight particle of which, is worth all the honours of the world. If we are blamed unjustly, let us without bitterness and in the spirit of peace, oppose truth to calumny; if that should continue, let us still humble ourselves. In thus depositing our reputation in the hands of God, we shall preserve it more effectually. Let us serve God in good and bad fame, like St. Paul, that we may be enabled to say with David: *O God, it is for you, that I have been overwhelmed with reproach, and that my countenance has been covered with confusion.*"

The holy prelate however acknowledges, that Christian patience has its limits; that it is sometimes lawful to repel calumny, and even to have recourse to law for the reparation of honour. He

lays down too cases, in which this may be permitted, and he says, that there are some crimes so atrocious and so infamous, that no calumny in those points should be suffered, when a justification is practicable. He likewise recognises the principle, admitted by St. Gregory the Great, that humility is not opposed to the rights of government; that we are not so far to pursue the ideas of virtue, as to abandon the cause of others; and he declares, that there are certain persons, on whose reputation the welfare of others depends; such are the pastors of the Church, magistrates, princes, and in general all those who are invested with dignity. "In these two cases," says the holy prelate, "it becomes a duty to seek for reparation in a peaceable and conciliating manner, without passion, without any impetuous behaviour, and without losing peace of heart; *and this, adds he, is the opinion of all Theologians.*" But as the Saints are invariably more indulgent to others than to themselves, though the holy prelate was by no means disposed to neglect his reputation, though he was frequently assailed in the most injurious manner, and accused of crimes of the worst description, sufficient to destroy among his people, that authority which can be supported only by an unblemished reputation, it does not appear, that he ever sought for legal redress, or

that he ever made the smallest complaint. His custom on such occasions, was to have recourse to God, and to tell Him, *that He knew the measure of reputation necessary for His service and His glory, and that as to himself, he wished for nothing more.* However this Saint, who so cherished humility, and who had in some measure carried Christian patience beyond the proper bounds, having heard of the attempts made to destroy his reputation with the Dukes of Savoy and Nemours, did not think it prudent to remain silent ; he justified his character with all the energy which his extreme meekness would admit. He observed the same conduct, when he was charged before His Holiness of neglecting in his diocess the progress of the Catholic faith, and of not taking sufficient precautions to prevent the circulation of heretical books.

It is thus that Christian humility, that virtue so necessary, and which is the foundation of all others, precludes not a rational regard for reputation, especially when the calumnies with which it is obscured, tend to the displeasure of God or the scandal of our neighbour, and prevent us from promoting the Divine glory, and from performing all the services for others, which charity, to which every object should yield, may appear to demand.

The holy prelate never regarded reputation, but with reference to these two objects. The Bishop of Belley relates on this subject, that the holy prelate being informed, that every species of calumny was circulated to his disadvantage at Paris, in consequence of some advice which he had given to persons of piety, but which affected the interests of others, wrote immediately to his friend with his usual tranquillity and indifference; and having mentioned this new persecution, he added that he hoped, that God would re-establish his credit with additional lustre, if that should be found necessary for His service. "Assuredly," continued he, "I seek not for reputation, but so far as that purpose may demand; for provided God be served, of what concern is it whether it be amidst good or bad fame, the lustre or the obscurity of reputation." It is related by the same Bishop, that being one day engaged in conversation with him, on the same subject, he heard him utter these remarkable words: "What is therefore this reputation, at whose shrine so many pay homage? At best, it is but a dream, a shadow, an opinion; it is but smoke, it is praise of which the remembrance vanishes with the sound; a species of estimation, often so ill founded, that many are filled with astonishment to find themselves commended

for vittues, at a time when they know themselves to be addicted to the opposite vices, and blamed for defects to which they are not subject. Those who complain of obloquy, are extremely delicate; it is but a little cross, arising from words, which the air carries away. This expression, *he has roused me*, instead of, *he has used injurious language*, is to me extremely disgusting. * * * *

A person must have a very nice ear, not to bear a sound, a noise, which vanishes in air, and to make it a subject of displeasure." However this same Bishop, who so highly commends the contempt of the holy prelate for public esteem, acknowledges that great regard should be paid to reputation; but he adds that this should be done more for the service of God, than for our own honour, and more to avoid scandal, than to acquire renown. This is the sentiment of all the Saints; and it is unquestionably the safest rule which can be followed on a matter of this importance.

XIV.

Of the love of our neighbour; how much that virtue was conspicuous in the character of St. Francis of Sales.

It is not possible that we should love God as we ought, and fulfil the greatest of all the commandments: *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with thy whole heart, with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind, without complying with the second, which is like to it; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.* For as the Apostle St. John says:* *He that loveth not his brother whom he seeth, how can he love God, whom he seeth not? Besides we cannot love God as we ought, without adopting His sentiments, and loving what He loves. Now God has always loved us, and loved us first, even when we were His enemies; and at a time when all men were involved in guilt, both Jews and Gentiles, and there was not even one that followed the right path.† God so loved the world, as to give His only begotten Son; that whosoever believeth in Him, may not perish, but have life everlasting. He hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings; He hath chosen us before the*

* St. John. 1. epist. c. 4. v. 20. † St. John. 3. 16.

*foundation of the world, and hath predestinated us unto the adoption of children. Even when we were dead by sins, He hath quickened us together in Christ, and hath raised us up together, and hath made us sit together in heavenly places, in Christ Jesus.** After so many favours, which we never could have hoped to enjoy, we should be guilty of the blackest ingratitude, if we did not love so good a God. But can we love Him, without loving men, who are His images, and the price of His blood, and whom He has commanded us to love as ourselves? The obligation of loving our neighbour, is then founded on nature, which leads us to love our fellow creatures, on the positive command of God, who ordains the precept, and on the model of Him, who has condescended to give us that example. But we are directed to love him as ourselves; this is the rule and measure of our love. For the same God who has graciously commanded us to love him, has prescribed the measure in which we are to love him as ourselves. This becomes an indispensable rule. Now we are not to love ourselves but for God and with reference to God, rendering ourselves conformable to the love which He has for us, and desiring no other blessings, but such as He is

* Ephes. c. 1. v. v. 3. 4. 5. et c. 2. v. v. 5. 6.

pleased to confer; because in reality, there are no other true benefits, at least as far as our welfare is concerned. It is thus, that we are to love our neighbour, always in the order of God, always with reference to Him; hence it follows that we ought even to be in a disposition to sacrifice to his wants, ourselves and every thing else; as the love, which is due to him, should possess an ascendancy over every other object, and prove the indispensable rule of our duties.

This has ever been invariably the doctrine of the holy prelate; and he avers that the love of our neighbour so essentially demands that we should love him in God, with reference to God, and for God, that we can never attain this true, steady and effectual love, unless God be the primary object. The reason assigned by him is, that all other motives which might give birth to love, are not sufficiently strong to ensure a lasting affection, and can never encounter that disgust and inconstancy so incident to the heart of man. Beauty soon fades; what charms us to-day, will be found to disgust to-morrow, either by some change, which has taken place in the object, or by the unavoidable vicissitudes of our temper. All other natural qualities are liable to the same defect; and though they should appear always the

same, yet when they have lost the grace of novelty, we become accustomed to them, and they no longer strike us; or at least they produce not an impression sufficiently powerful to stay the natural inconstancy of our hearts; or the objects which surround us, are in a constant state of fluctuation, and we inevitably partake of the change. Thus, whatever motive may prompt the love of our neighbour, if it be not from God, and be not centered in Him, we shall never love our neighbour intensely and steadily; we shall not love him as God ordains, that is as ourselves. This has induced the holy prelate to observe, that the reason why friendships, founded on natural qualities, are inferior to those which have God for their motive, is clearly, "that they are not permanent, because the origin is so unsubstantial, and on the least accident, they are succeeded by coolness and complete reserve; a circumstance which cannot happen to those connexions which have God for their motive, because the foundation is firm and permanent." So far then from loving our neighbour less by complying with this injunction, than we should by neglecting it, it may be laid down as a general principle, that we shall never love him with a real and permanent affection, if God be not made the great and leading motive of our love.

Indeed, as the holy prelate again remarks, if we were to love any one because he is virtuous, or friendly to us, what will become of that love, if he should cease to be virtuous, or to be our friend? As the foundation of our love would thus be destroyed, how could it any longer subsist? "But," continues he, "he who loves in God, and in God only, can never fear a change; because, as God is ever the same, an object so permanent cannot produce a variable effect. He, whom we love, let us suppose becomes our enemy, he injures us, he insults us; we shall however love him in God. * * * * And why? Because the same God who commands us to love our neighbour, enjoins us likewise to love our enemies, to overcome their ingratitude by our kindness, and to pray for those who persecute us." It is certain, that nothing is more calculated to destroy friendship, than the ingratitude and the unkind treatment we experience from those whom we regard as our friends. This is unquestionably true of human friendships, which have not God for their basis; nature and reason discover no resource on those occasions; but as to the friendships which are founded on charity, and directed to God as their principle and end, they remain unshaken; they subsist in defiance of the hatred of those whom we love, and who should bear us

equal love. This is the love of our neighbour, which God ordains, and of which He has given us the example; no other love has any merit in His sight. This induced the holy prelate to say, "that there are certain kinds of love, which appear ardent and perfect to creatures, but which in the sight of God are inconsiderable and of no value, because these friendships are not founded on true charity, which is God, but only on certain connexions and natural inclinations, and on human considerations, that are commendable and pleasing. On the contrary, there are other friendships, which in the eyes of the world, seem trifling, but which before God, are excellent and complete, because they subsist in God and for God, without any mixture of interested motives. Now the acts of charity which we perform for those whom we love in this manner, are infinitely more perfect, as they have God for their object; but the services and helps which we display in consequence of natural affection, possess much less merit, on account of the great complacency and satisfaction, which we feel in performing them, and because we usually act more from this impulse, than from the motive of the love of God."

This doctrine of the holy prelate, which requires us to love our neighbour only in God and

for God, is founded on the great commandment of the love of God. Indeed if we are to love Him with our whole heart, with all our soul and with all our mind, what have we left for our neighbour, but that which is performed in Him, and for Him, and with reference to Him? our love ought not to centre in the creature, but to be directed to God; and in this case it is not so much the creature, which is the object of our love as God Himself; thus it is that we love Him with our whole heart. In this manner did the holy prelate practice this great commandment; and this consideration rendered him so zealous for the salvation of souls. The Mother de Chantal, in the portrait of his interior, to be seen in her letter to the Reverend Father John of St. Francis, of the congregation of the Feuillans, assures us, that when he had to perform any service for his neighbour, he was indefatigable; that he never allowed himself any repose, till he had restored calm to troubled consciences; that in her opinion, zeal for the good of souls was the prevailing part of the character of the holy Bishop; that she had often seen him leave that which immediately regarded God, to attend to his neighbour, when the first was not a matter of conscientious obligation; then in order to express how deeply the love of his neighbour was engraven

on his heart, she exclaims in a strain of admiration: " Good God! what tenderness! what meekness! what invincible patience! what a spirit of industry did he display, when his neighbour was to be served! He at length sacrificed his life to this object." It had often been observed to the holy prelate, that his continual fatigues, and the little indulgence with which he treated himself, would not fail to shorten his life. " I am a Bishop," would he reply; " my life does not belong to me, but to my flock, or rather to the flock of Jesus Christ, which He has been pleased to confide to my care; the good pastor ought readily to sacrifice his life for his sheep." It is thus that the Saints, less devoted to life, than to their duties, sacrifice themselves for the salvation of their neighbour; charity cannot be carried to a greater height, and it may be said to be complete, when it extinguishes in us the love of life, and the desire of preserving it.

XV.

Of the care of the poor; of Alms-deeds; distinguished conduct of the holy prelate in this particular.

Of all duties of Christian charity, none are more forcibly pressed on our attention in the

Holy Scripture than alms-deeds and the care of the poor. It may likewise be asserted, that no duty is more just and indispensable; and that the difference which fortune, or rather Providence has placed between the rich and the poor, prevents them not from being brethren. Nothing can justify an unfeeling conduct, or even indifference towards the indigent; nature, grace, the law and the Gospel, all loudly espouse their cause; so that to neglect their concerns, is not only opposite to Christian virtue, but even to the feelings of humanity. The tender regard which the holy prelate ever displayed for all those comprised under the denomination of our neighbours, was observed to increase, when wretchedness and poverty were united to that quality, which nature and religion should render so dear; and his charity always active, was never more powerfully exerted, than when he had to relieve those whom Providence appears to have consigned to our care. In the abridgment of his life, contained in the bull of his canonization, his exertions in favour of the poor are recorded with great applause. We are there informed, that after the example of St. Gregory the Great, he carried always about him a list of their names, that none might be forgotten; that he paid a particular attention to the relief of the modest poor; that in alleviating their

wants, he was careful to spare them any confusion ; that he never made them purchase a slender succour at the expence of overwhelming shame, sometimes worse than poverty itself ; that on those occasions, he was an enemy to noise and ostentation ; and that he bestowed that in private, which he knew our heavenly Father would one day restore in public. An exact observer of the Gospel, he sometimes, for the purpose of edification, would not conceal his alms ; and on other occasions, in order to avoid commendation and vain glory, he retired from the eyes of men, wishing to have God alone as his witness, whose glory was the sole motive of all his actions. This same abridgment likewise informs us, that not having sufficient property to supply his charities, he made considerable deductions from his own expences to answer his charitable demands. Neither equipages, nor valuable furniture formed the ornaments of his palace. The same holy parsimony was observable in his dress and at his table. Frugality, abstemiousness, even fasting, in a word his general system of saving, formed the surest supply for his charities ; and this circumstance excites our admiration of his charity and ardent zeal for the poor. Indeed it is always a concern of some merit, to relieve indigence from the superfluities of an ample fortune ; but to abridge necessary ex-

pences, to fast, to forego the conveniences of life, and to reduce ourselves to a state of poverty, in order to give alms, can proceed only from the most consummate charity. Such was that of the holy prelate. For as it is observed in the same abridgment, however frugality might have presided at his table, it was no sooner served up, than he sent the choicest parts of the repast to the poor. Even his Chapel and pontifical ornaments, were not spared in a time of signal distress. He has been known to pawn his pastoral ring, even to strip himself of his clothes, to assist the indigent, when he had no other means of affording succour.

But it is not to be supposed, that to give alms in a Christian manner, it is sufficient to relieve the poor, without choice and without discernment. *Happy, says the Prophet, is the man who uses understanding towards the poor.* By this discretion, demands, which apparently are not so urgent, are often preferred before claims, which seem to require immediate relief. This entered into the contemplation of the holy prelate, in providing for young girls in distress; he saved their reputation, removed the occasion of a great number of crimes, and furnished many children with a Christian education; many were married at his expence. For the same reason, when he

saw any called to a more perfect life, he spared no pains to procure their admission into religious houses. But as the infirm, persons labouring under corporal defects, widows and aged women, could find no houses to receive them, he instituted the pious Order of the Visitation, where persons of all descriptions are received; in order that every want might find an appropriate relief. The hospitality, which he practised, whether at home or even during his absence, was derived from the same source; and his charity on this point, so strongly recommended to Bishops in the Holy Scripture and Councils, was carried so far, that when his episcopal palace proved insufficient for the accommodation of his guests, he hired houses in town for the reception of his company. It will doubtless be a subject of surprise, that with an income extremely limited, he was enabled to meet so many urgent demands; but our surprise increases, when we learn from this abridgment of his life, that he did not relieve the poor with a close economy, but amply, and with a species of profusion. It is recorded on this subject, that at a time when his diocese was reduced to great distress by famine, he ordered a great quantity of corn to be purchased, of which he directed the distribution with so much prudence and circumspection, that no poor family was destitute of

succour; this liberality was continued during the period of the famine. Whether any miraculous operation took place in this instance; whether the Father of mercies, who daily multiplies with so much bounty, the seed which is entrusted to His Providence, gave an increase to the grain in the storehouses of the holy prelate, we shall not undertake to decide; but it cannot be denied, that a charity without limit, like that of the holy prelate, was one of the greatest miracles of grace. We may likewise infer from this instance, that it is not necessary to be extremely rich, in order to bestow abundant alms; and that the love of the poor always discovers great resources, when it is conducted with zeal and prudence. It would be an endless task to record all his enterprises in favour of his neighbour and of the poor in particular. His charity was extended without distinction to those of his own diocess, to strangers, to Catholics, to heretics, and even to the brute creation. He could not endure to see animals ill used; and he was often known to purchase them, in order to enjoy the gratification of restoring them to their liberty. These are little incidents; but they discover a goodness of heart, which cannot sufficiently be admired. God, who is styled by command, the Most High, wishes to be called Most Good; if the first quality impresses fear, the

second excites love; the dispositions of the heart are not inferior to the endowments of the understanding; but because the hearts of men are prone to corruption, they set not that value on goodness, to which it is entitled.

XVI.

Treatment of Servants; sentiments and conduct of the holy Bishop on this subject. Remarkable conference between him and the Bishop of Belley on this article.

* Of all those comprised under the denomination of our neighbours, there are none more entitled to this appellation than servants. They live would he say, under the same roof with us; they eat the same bread, they are perpetually about our persons; accordingly they formed a leading object of his charity. On this subject he used to observe, that masters generally treated them in a manner altogether inexcusable, and that the savageness of their conduct had given occasion to the known proverb: *So many servants, so many enemies*. However, would he remark, the Apostle has no hesitation in declaring, that he who does not take care of his household, is worse than an infidel, and deserves not the

* Spirit of St. Francis of Sales. Part V.

name of a Christian. Indeed infidels take care of their slaves, for fear of losing the value of their purchase, or the price of their services. But Christians, under the pretext that their servants are at liberty to leave them, pay no regard to their health, or to the circumstances of life and death; and many carry their barbarity so far as to dismiss them, or send them to hospitals, when their strength is exhausted, or sickness has overtaken them in their service; a sin, adds he, that cries to heaven for vengeance, as much as that which is committed by retaining their wages. The holy prelate therefore requires, that they be treated with mildness; that all injurious language towards them, blows and every species of ill-treatment be constantly forborne. He does not desire that their faults should be passed over without correction; but he insists that this business be performed with charity and meekness; and that if they are corrected when they do ill, that they receive some recompence and some demonstration of esteem, when they give satisfaction. He adds, that two things are strictly due to servants; the first is, a promised recompence, which cannot be withheld without a great crime. The other is a thing which costs little, but contributes more than every other contrivance to secure their attach-

ment; it consists in occasionally testifying an approbation of their services, in shewing a reliance on their fidelity and affection, and in assurances, that they are regarded either as a part of the family, or as poor friends, who would be cheerfully relieved in the hour of need. A gale of wind, would he exclaim, acting upon the sails of a galley, makes it advance with greater speed, than a hundred strokes of the oar, given by all the crew of slaves on board; and a seasonable demonstration of kindness, secures the attachment of a servant, more than the menaces, the strokes, and all the severity, which is but too frequently employed.

The Bishop of Belley, who records these sentiments of the holy prelate, which are likewise his own, adds that there was never a better master, who took more care of his servants, or who was more tenderly beloved. His steward was entrusted with the task of reproof and correction. As to himself, in imitation of Sovereigns, who have under them judges to enforce the law; and who reserve to themselves the power of mitigating penalties, and of granting pardon, he treated his domestics with kindness, and with that incomparable meekness, which was always admired in his character, and which is indeed a prominent

feature of true and heroic virtue. If he felt a reproof to be indispensably necessary, he acquitted himself with so much delicacy and precaution, that those to whom he spoke, were sincerely ashamed of their faults, and never failed to amend their conduct. For let it not be forgotten, that meekness possesses a greater charm, than is generally imagined, and that there are but few tempers so ungovernable, as not to yield to its impression. It is true he was careful in his choice; and as he was gifted with a wonderful discernment, he was seldom deceived in the judgment which he formed of those whom he admitted to his service; he examined them with care; but after the first trial, they found in him a true father, who lost no opportunity of doing them kindness, and of securing their attachment by his benefactions. To possess royal authority over others, cannot be the lot of each man who covets it; there must be a concurrence of birth, of rights, of rank, and of an elevated situation, which devolves to few. But there is no one who is precluded from the advantage of reigning over the hearts of others by meekness and kindness, and of securing their attachment by ties proportionably strong, as they are altogether free, and unmixed with any species of violence.

The Bishop of Belley relates on this subject, an instance of his kindness to his servants, which exhibits his character in colours too strong not to find a place in this history. He had a domestic who had always shewn a great attachment to him, and whom he had ever treated with peculiar regard. This man contracted an intimacy with a young girl residing in the city, who was possessed of sufficient property to make him comfortable by consenting to marriage. But as this project could not be completed without leaving so good a master, and he was afraid above all things of displeasing him, he was constrained, in order to conceal his passion, to visit the young woman by night; and as she was much in the country, he had every day to cross a river for the purpose, often at the hazard of his life. This connexion could not long subsist without the knowledge of the holy prelate; but he was informed at the same time, that no impropriety of conduct passed during those nocturnal visits; that a marriage proposed by his servant to the friends of the young woman, was the motive of the excursion, and that it would ensure to him a decent establishment. The holy prelate, far from disapproving the match, determined to support it with all his interest. He therefore spoke to him on the subject, and gently but kindly reproached him for

concealing the affair, and for not knowing his master's inclination on all occasions to serve him; he then told him, that he could never disapprove that those whom God called to marriage, should engage in that state; that it was a holy engagement in which many Christians had sanctified their souls; that he could have wished to have retained him longer in his service, but that every one should follow the call of God, and that he should not diminish his regard for him, if in the new state which he was about to embrace, he should keep the fear of God before his eyes, and continue to follow the Christian conduct which he had hitherto shewn. He added, that he would endeavour to serve him in this affair; and that if he had not property enough to succeed, he would supply the deficiency from his own income. The servant was so enchanted with such unexampled kindness, that his affection for his destined consort, appeared likely to yield to his regard for so good a master. He even made an offer to think no more of the affair, and begged to be allowed to pass the remainder of his days in his service. But the holy prelate, who knew that the marriage would be a fortune to him, declined the proposal. He did more; he sent for the friends of the young woman, removed by his address, some obstacles which obstructed the conclusion of this affair,

furnished himself a supply agreeably to his promise, and brought the business to a close, satisfactory to all parties. A master, who thus chooses his servants with discernment, and treats them with kindness, may depend upon the sacrifice of their lives, if it should be necessary for his service.

The Bishop of Belley who relates this history, adds that not being possessed of the mildness of character which distinguished the holy prelate, he sometimes found reason to blame the kindness with which he treated his servants; and that one day he expressed his sentiments on the subject, by citing the well known proverb: *familiarity breeds contempt, and contempt hatred*. "That is true," replied the holy prelate; "but that is to be understood of low, coarse and indecent familiarity, and not of that which proceeds from goodness of heart, and pays a strict attention to decorum; for as it is the offspring of the love of our neighbour, it must in its turn necessarily produce regard. Now true love is never without esteem, nor consequently without respect for the person who is loved; since love is founded only on the esteem of that which we love. You know the saying of the tyrant: let them hate me, provided they fear me. I am not of that sentiment; I

would rather reverse the medal and say: let them despise me, provided they love me; for if contempt produces love, love will soon destroy contempt and substitute respect in its place. For there is nothing which men revere more, and which they so much fear to offend, as that object which is loved in truth and sincerity of heart." This answer of the holy prelate, gave occasion to the Bishop of Belley to tell him, that agreeably to these maxims, the event would be to leave things to hazard, and consign the reins to servants, since neither their disposition, nor their inconsiderable share of education would prevent them from abusing the indulgence of their masters. The holy prelate, after acknowledging that facility might be carried too far by a literal interpretation of his sentiments, added, "that charity, which governs the heart in regulating the general assemblage of virtue, knows how to bring into action discretion, prudence, justice, moderation, magnanimity, so necessary for the management of servants, as much as humility inspires a love of our abjection, and patience leads to Christian suffering and Christian meekness." As this last virtue held the most distinguished place in his heart, he could not forbear the repeated mention of it in the following words: "All that I have to say on the subject of servants is, that we are never

to forget that they are our neighbours, poor and humble brethren, whom we are obliged by the law of God, to love as ourselves." "Now," continues he, with that admirable simplicity never to be sufficiently admired, "let us love them as ourselves, those dear neighbours who closely surround us, who live under the same roof, and subsist on our property; let us treat them as ourselves, or as we should wish to be treated, if we were placed in their situation." This is unquestionably the safest rule that can be followed with respect to our neighbour and particularly our servants; but we must remember, that whatever may be suggested by goodness of heart in their favour, must, agreeably to the holy prelate, be invariably under the influence of discretion, prudence, moderation, and justice.

XVII.

Of Christian friendship; of the choice of friends; sentiments and conduct of the holy Bishop with respect to his friends; that private friendships are not suitable to persons who live in religious communities and to clergymen; inconveniences from such connections.

Besides the love and the general charity which is indispensably due to all those comprised under

the denomination of our neighbour, it is in our power, and according to the holy prelate, it becomes a duty to form particular connexions with a small number of virtuous and select persons, to whom we are to give our confidence, open our heart, and on whom we may depend in many concerns, which prudence does not permit us to entrust to all those, whom charity obliges us to love as ourselves. In fact friendship, that pleasing connexion, which may be called the seasoning of every blessing, and the alleviation of every evil, never found a more feeling heart. Barbarians in this respect discover the same taste as civilized nations; and no breast is so, devoid of feeling, as not to indulge in the natural propensity of forming a union with some person of similar dispositions, and of pouring into the heart of a friend, what must be concealed from the rest of mankind. But the more congenial this inclination is to the heart of man, the greater care is necessary not to be deceived in the choice of friends. One of the greatest faults which, can be committed in social life, is a mistake of this nature; yet nothing is more difficult than to avoid it, and to distinguish the flatterer from the friend. Apparently the resemblance is very striking, though the qualities of each are perfectly opposite. Hence arise those dangerous mistakes, which are but with extreme

difficulty avoided, even by persons more enlightened than the general mass of mankind, more attentive to discern appearance from reality, and less exposed to error and imposture. Thus the Holy Scripture, after commending friendship in these words, *a faithful friend is a strong protection, and he who has found him, has found a treasure, he is the remedy of life and immortality*; immediately adds, that he is a present from heaven, and those only who fear God, are so happy as not to be deceived.

* St. Francis of Sales having to speak on the subject of Christian friendship, for he recognises no other species, first with St. Thomas lays down the principle, that friendship is a virtue. He likewise presupposes with the same Doctor, that perfect friendship cannot be extended to many persons; and he adds, that perfection does not consist in having no particular friendships, but in having those only which are good, holy and sacred. He proves this maxim by the example of St. Peter and St. Paul, of St. Basil and St. Gregory Nazianzen, and of many other Saints. At length he establishes it by that of Christ Himself, who calls Lazarus His friend, and of whom the

* Introduction. Part III. c. 17, et seq.

Gospel relates, that He had a particular friendship for St. John, and for the holy sisters Martha and Mary Magdalen. But as the holy prelate gives the example of Christ, to prove the lawfulness of having private friends, he requires that our Redeemer should be our model, and that we should love our friends as He loved His. "Contract no friendship," says he, "but with those who can communicate with you on virtuous subjects, and the more necessary the virtues are, which you shall establish by your connexion, the more perfect will be your friendship. If your conversation relates to science, your friendship is certainly very commendable; it will still become more so, if by your mutual communications you lead each other to virtue. But if your reciprocal conversation is directed to devotion and Christian perfection, Good God! how precious will your friendship become! It will be excellent, because it comes from God; excellent, because it tends to God; excellent, because it will remain eternally in God. O how good it is to love upon earth, as the Saints love in heaven, and to learn to love in this world, as we shall mutually love in the other! I speak not here of the love of simple charity; for this we must have for all mankind; but I speak of spiritual friendship, by which two or three or more souls communicate their devo-

tions, their spiritual affections, and render themselves but one spirit." True friendship, according to the holy prelate, can be found only in the society of virtuous persons. It must have virtue for its foundation, and God for its end; it would be a discredit to it to believe, that it is to be met with among the wicked. Their criminal connexions are not entitled to so noble a name; a share at least of uprightness, of good faith, of disinterestedness, of fidelity and constancy must enter into the composition of a friend. These qualities cannot be found among the wicked. But spiritual friendships have besides another advantage over human affections, which are not founded on virtue; they are in some measure unshaken, and remain at least for a greater length of time. For as St. Gregory Nazianzen observes, "those friendships which relate only to the body, are fleeting and perishable like their object; they are like the flowers of spring, which bloom but shortly to fade; and as the flame is extinguished when the fuel is withdrawn, so corporal affection disappears, when the beauty to which it owes its birth, is effaced by the hand of time. But chaste friendship, and those affections, which are according to God, are proportionably more durable, as the principle on which they are built, is firm and substantial; and the more they resemble the

excellence of increated beauty, the more closely are they cemented by the tie of Divine love, by which they are inflamed." The holy prelate recognises with St. Gregory Nazianzen, the same advantages in spiritual and virtuous friendships, over affections which are merely human. "It appears to me," says he, "that all other friendships are shadows only in comparison of these spiritual connexions; and that their ties are but chains of glass in comparison of the great band of holy devotion which exists in friendships of this nature."

He exhorts us to form no others; but he directs us not to relinquish nor despise these friendships, which nature and duty both lead us to entertain towards relations, kindred, benefactors, neighbours and others of the same description. "I speak," says he, "of friendships, which you choose yourself." There is another advantage in virtuous friendships, that they are compatible with every duty. † We may prove ourselves amidst them good citizens, good relatives, good Christians, good subjects; society, the state, religion, may derive benefit from such connexions. On the contrary, friendships, which are not founded on virtue, have often proved injurious to families, to religion, to the state, and to the parties concerned. It is therefore an indisputable truth, that virtuous friendship is of the utmost importance to human

beings both with reference to time and eternity; and this consideration induced the holy prelate to bestow on it such distinguished commendations, and to advise its cultivation even among those, who aspire to the greatest perfection. "Many will tell you," says he, "that you are to form no sort of private affection or friendship, as such objects engross the heart, employ the mind, and give birth to jealousy. But they are deceived in their advice."

He however acknowledges, that particular friendships, so useful in social life, are not proper in religious communities, that are well regulated; and the reason alleged by him is, that they usually produce partialities. He adds, "that as those who are walking on even ground, are not under the necessity of giving to each other a helping hand; but that those who are travelling by difficult and slippery roads, afford mutual security by holding together; so those who live in religious houses, stand not in need of particular friendships; but persons engaged in the world, require such a support, and such a mutual help in their difficult passage through life." He produces another reason, when he observes, "that in the world all do not pursue jointly the same end like religious communities; all are not animated with

the same spirit ; it then becomes necessary to be more private, and to contract friendships agreeably to our views ; and this peculiar conduct creates undoubtedly a holy partiality, which produces no other division but that of good and evil, of the bee and the drone." With the exception of religious communities, the holy prelate approves the use of friendship in every other situation of life. But he not only approved it by his precepts ; he sanctioned it by his example. Though he loved all mankind with a cordiality which has but few examples, he did not contract friendship with facility ; he selected his friends ; but when once he had judged them worthy of his regard and confidence, he fulfilled all the duties of friendship with the most scrupulous exactness. The goodness of his heart, his mildness, and the other eminent qualities which shone in his character, notwithstanding his profound humility, procured him a great number of friends at Rome, at Paris, at the court of France, in Savoy, and even in places through which he had but travelled. This appears from his letters, in reading which we may remark, how much he was attached to the calls of friendship, and how tenderly he loved his friends. However as it was not possible, that he should discover for all an equal share of regard, it may be pronounced, that the persons the dearest

to his heart, were John Peter Camus the Bishop of Belley, Des Hayes, the Mother de Chantal, and his sister-in-law the Baroness of Thorens. They were all persons distinguished by their virtue; the leading quality he sought in his friends. The death of the Baroness of Thorens, will furnish an occasion of recording an instance of the tender regard which he betrayed for those, with whom God had united him by the bands of holy friendship.

This lady was the daughter according to the flesh, and more according to the spirit of the Mother de Chantal; and she had been married at a very early age to the Baron of Thorens, brother of the holy prelate. As he was a Colonel of cavalry, he received orders from the Duke of Savoy to conduct his regiment to Piedmont. Some time after he was seized with an illness, which hurried him to his grave. The young widow, who at that time was with her mother, remained inconsolable at the loss. The holy prelate and the Mother de Chantal, who felt the loss with the most exquisite sensibility, spared no pains to enable her to support it with resignation to the will of God. Notwithstanding her own efforts to overcome her grief, she sunk under the burden; at the end of five months, she experienced a pre-

mature delivery; her sufferings lasted but twenty-four hours. During the last six, amidst the most excruciating pains, she made her confession, received the holy communion, took the habit of a novice, made her profession, received the extreme-unction, and all this with so much piety, with such lively and moving acts of faith, of the love of God, of resignation, of patience, that the holy prelate, who never left her, was deeply impressed with grief and admiration. At length before she expired, she had the satisfaction to see her infant child baptized; and as if she had no other wish to form, she departed in the arms of her holy mother at the age of nineteen. The holy prelate, who had remained with her to the last, had the resolution to close her eyes, and to perform the last melancholy duties. But after having performed what he considered due to his ministry, he thought he might pay what he owed to the friendship of a person so near, so holy and so accomplished. Accordingly after the funeral was over, he departed to seek consolation from the Bishop of Belley. His attendants surprised to see him abandon the Mother de Chantal in so distressing a situation, represented to him the necessity of affording her consolation. "You do little justice to my affliction," replied the holy prelate,

“to suppose her more distressed than myself; I am acquainted with the force of her mind and the weakness of my own. How can I furnish her with consolation, who stand in more need of it myself? Be not dissatisfied, if I seek it, where I think it is to be found.” The Bishop of Belley, who gives this account, continues it in the following terms: “he accordingly came to pay me a visit, and related to me the history of this edifying death, preceded by so pious a life, with such sensibility, that I could scarcely refrain from melting into tears. Let it not be hence supposed, that his piety was marked by a meanness of spirit or any degree of weakness. Devotion is by no means a virtue of a savage, senseless, unfeeling, unnatural complexion. That stoical apathy, which some of the ancients erroneously endeavoured to introduce into the Christian religion, has been rejected by the Church, which is ever animated with that spirit, that induced St. Paul to say: bewail the dead with moderation, but not like those who have no hope; the Church permits us to entertain a tender feeling on the loss of persons who are dear to us.” It is thus that this great Bishop justifies the tears which friendship drew from the holy prelate; and he adds in the same passage, that we are not to be surprised at the sensibility shewn by the Saints since the friend-

ship which our Redeemer had for Lazarus, engaged Him to deplore his death, though He knew that He was able, and was about to raise him to life.

He afterwards relates, that having lost by death a great friend, who was a person of eminent virtue, he received a visit from the holy prelate, who had been apprised of his extreme affliction. "He gave me," says he, "the greatest comfort, and discovered much satisfaction, that I betrayed the feelings of a father, and that I experienced a real tenderness for the flock, which God had confided to my care; and as I charged myself with weakness on that account, he replied; nature is infirm, but be assured, that the sensibility which we feel for our friends, proceeds from strength of mind; when I speak of strength of mind, I mean the strength of holy affection which comes from the spirit of God:" "continue then," added he, "to be weak in the sense which the Apostle conveys in these words, *who is infirm, but I am infirm too?* and again in another place, *I will glory in my infirmitics, that the virtue of Christ may dwell in me.* And what is this lovely virtue of Christ, but compassion and mercy." In this manner did the holy prelate justify not

only friendship itself, but all that tender regard which it leads us to entertain for our friends. But he did not confine his care to this only ; his friendship was not only tender, but discovered itself by its practical effects ; he spared neither money, attention, nor influence, when he had to serve his friends. He made their interest his own ; he shared in their distress as well as in their good fortune ; and as prosperity did not form the tie by which he was united to them, adversity could never dissolve the connexion. Always steady, always even, he loved in his friends those qualities only which God alone can give, and fortune can never take away. But whatever regard he conceived for his friends, he never loved them but according to the order of God, always ready to make the sacrifice of them to His will, and to endure the final separation from them, when His supreme orders, to which all things must yield, demanded such a sacrifice. He loved his friends for God, but less than God ; equally remote from those extremes, by which we either love nothing, or we love too much those objects, which are to be loved with discretion, and in a manner subordinate to our duty to God. *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, with thy whole soul, and with thy*

whole mind. This is the rule, to which every thing must bend; and with which we are indispensably to comply.

XVIII.

Of sincerity and uprightness of heart; how much they formed a prominent part of his character. His sentiments on lies and equivocation. Rules replete with prudence for conversation.

The Bishop of Belley, the best witness that can be produced of the sentiments and conduct of the holy prelate, because from his very strict intimacy with him, he was better acquainted with his character than any other person, this venerable Bishop relates, that being one day engaged in conversation with him, he could not refrain from expressing his astonishment, that Charles Emmanuel, the Duke of Savoy, that Prince so well versed in political knowledge, did not employ him in state concerns, and particularly in conducting negotiations. "For," added he, "besides the advantages of your prudence, which is unknown to yourself alone, your address, your mildness, and your patience in negotiations, the reputation of your probity and piety, are so generally acknowledged, that before you would ever

open your lips on any business, it would be said : whatever you shall determine, we are resolved to adopt. An affair must be very desperate indeed, if it failed in your hands ; I think you would almost surmount impossibilities." The holy prelate, who was not fond of commendation, and who was far from entertaining that opinion of himself, which his friend had expressed, testified his surprise that his character was so little known to the Bishop. He applauded in significant terms the conduct of the Duke of Savoy in the choice of his ministers, and contended, that it was an effect of his discernment and of a perfect knowledge of the talents of his subjects, that he never applied to him for counsel. " For," added he in very intelligible language, " independently that I differ from you in the opinion which you are pleased to form of my address and prudence in the management of political transactions, when even the bare mention of prudence, of business, of policy, gives me alarm, and I claim so little in that matter, that it amounts to nothing ; I will give you a hint, but the secret hint of a friend, dropped into the ear, or rather addressed to the heart of his friend ; to speak my mind openly, I am unskilled in the art of lying and dissimulation ; I cannot feign with any address. This is the grand secret in the conduct of political transactions ; it is the

art of arts in the concerns of human prudence, and of civil policy." "Now," added he, "I would not be the bearer of a false dispatch, for all the dominions of Savoy, of France, and of the whole empire; I proceed in the ancient Gallic style, with uprightness and simplicity. What I have on my lips, is precisely what exists in my thoughts; I am unable to speak, as the prophet says, *in a heart and a heart*; I hate duplicity like death, knowing that God holds the deceitful man as an abomination. Few people know me, who do not recognise these traits in my character. For this reason it is very prudently imagined, that I am not qualified for an employment, in which in the usual way peace is held forth to a neighbour, against whom hostility is designed in the heart. Add to this, that I have always idolized as a heavenly, sovereign and divine maxim, that advice of the Apostle; that he who is dedicated to God, ought not to be engaged in temporal concerns."

It is thus that the holy prelate exhibited a portrait of his own heart, with a frankness and simplicity, which can never be sufficiently admired. It cannot be asserted, that he was little qualified for the management of business, as he represents himself in the passage here inserted; it has been

recorded in his life, with what success he acquitted himself in various concerns, when the cause of God demanded his application. But his undertakings were always pursued with that inflexible uprightness, which distinguished his character; he had received from nature an excellent understanding, a great fund of sense, mild and insinuating manners, a degree of patience equal to any adverse events; practice and experience had matured his natural qualities; he was learned, graceful in person; in a word, nothing was wanting to raise him to the highest employments, and to enable him to sustain them with honour. The Bishop of Belley knew him better than he imagined, when he judged him capable of filling the first dignities of the state. The same judgment was formed at Rome, when it was proposed to make him a Cardinal. The court of France entertained the same opinion, when he received the offer of the Archbishopric of Paris. But the corruption of the times in which he lived, his uprightness, his humility, his attachment to the functions of his ministry, did not permit him to display his acquirements; they were however discovered in defiance of his attempts to conceal them, and soon were they withdrawn from notice; his profound humility hid them constantly from others and often from himself. As to the

terrors which he represents himself to have felt at the bare mention of *prudence*, this proceeded from the little esteem which he conceived for natural and acquired qualities, from his conviction that God governs all things, and that it becomes necessary to rely on Him alone, and from his perfect and continual submission to the orders of divine Providence. "He often told us," says the Mother de Chantal, "that if he had to pass through life again, he would have despised human prudence more than ever, in order to submit himself, from the earliest dawn of reason, to the guidance of divine Providence." He conducted to this spirit of abandonment all those souls, whom he directed, as he thought it the surest road to perfection. But this abandonment, this indifference of which he so often spoke, regarded only the events of this life, since human prudence, to which it is opposed, extends no farther.

* A prelate possessed of so much sincerity and uprightness, naturally formed to the same spirit, the souls that were under his direction, and imbibed his sentiments. "Let our manner of speaking," says he, "be mild, open, sincere, simple and upright; beware of duplicity, dissimulation

* Introduction. Part III. c. 30.

and artifice. Though it is assuredly not proper to reveal every sort of truth, we are to say nothing contrary to truth: never tell a lie, either to excuse yourself, or for any other purpose. * * * A true excuse is always more handsome and more effectual than falsehood." The holy prelate therefore maintains, that artifices are dangerous and to be avoided; "for," continues he, "as the sacred scripture declares, the Divine spirit does not dwell in a double mind. Of whatever nature artifice may be, it never equals Christian simplicity; the prudence of the world and the artifices of the flesh belong to the votaries of the world; but the children of God seek neither windings, nor lurking-holes; their hearts are without any secret recesses; "and he who walks with simplicity," says the wise man, "walks with confidence." He adds, that one of the great ornaments of a Christian life, is to be found in accuracy and simplicity of language, and on this subject, he refers to the sentiment of the prophet: *I have said, I will take care of my ways, that I sin not with my tongue:* and again, *Lord place a guard before my mouth, and a door to surround my lips.* It is a serious truth, that, as by the tongue the greatest number of faults is committed, too much attention cannot be bestowed on the regulation of this little member. The holy prelate records on this topic, the senti-

ment of St. Lewis. This great Prince used to say, that the means of avoiding the disputes so common in conversation, was never to contradict any one, except silence and complaisance might prove hurtful or criminal; for under such circumstances it is not lawful to be silent, particularly for persons invested with authority; that on such occasions mildness and address are to be employed, without offering any degree of violence to the minds of others, because force carries not the power of persuasion, and constraint produces opposition.

The holy prelate adds, that the ancients by their repeated advice to speak little, did not intend that we should be confined to few words, but that we should utter none that are useless; because the quality and not the quantity should be attended to; he maintains that to speak too much and too little, are two extremes equally to be avoided. To decline from ill humour, or from an untoward austerity of manner to bear a part in familiar conversation, betrays either contempt or distrust. To speak always without listening to others, is a species of presumption and tyrannical monopoly in a concern, in which of all others in the world, complete liberty should prevail. He adds, that St. Lewis never approved the practice

of whispering in company, at table, or in counsel: The reason assigned by this holy king is, that where there is any thing useful or agreeable to be communicated, politeness requires that the whole company should hear it; if there be an important secret, some more seasonable opportunity is to be selected to speak on the subject. On the whole, the venerable prelate had so much aversion for every thing opposed to sincerity, that he could not ~~enture~~ the least equivocation. He often with great propriety observed, says the Bishop of Belley, *that by this theological artifice, persons were willing to canonize falsehood.* He added, that God always conducted the just man *by right ways*, because he had uprightness of heart; and that those who pursued oblique and dark paths, were not children of uprightness and light. "If the mouth that lies," continued he, "kills the soul, what will not be done by the deceitful tongue which speaks *in a heart and in a heart*, that is which divides the heart; and the divided heart according to the prophet is death. Accordingly of those who have a double heart does the prophet say, "let death come upon them, and let them descend alive into hell." The holy prelate, says the same Bishop, often applied to the doctrine of equivocation, what our Redeemer said of the Scribes and Pharisees, who went about the world

to make a proselyte, and when they had instructed him in their own way, they rendered him not virtuous, but doubly criminal, "in the same manner," continued he, "those who think of saving the truth by equivocation, destroy it doubly; since nothing is so hostile to truth and simplicity, as duplicity and artifice; and what can be charged with greater duplicity than equivocation." It may finally be observed on this subject, that speech was given to man to explain his meaning; all therefore that tends to disguise it is contrary to the natural use of words. It becomes no longer a tie of human society, agreeably to the institution of God; on the contrary it breaks and dissolves it; accordingly what can be more advisable than to avoid the liar, and to have no connexion with those who employ the noble gift of speech for the base purposes of deceit? This may be applied to equivocation, as well as to direct falsehood; they both tend to the same end, which is to conceal the truth, to excite imposition and surprise. When therefore it is not advisable to tell the whole truth, it is better to be silent, than to disguise it by artifices unworthy of Christian sincerity.

XIX.

Of meekness and patience; remedies against anger. Sentiments of the holy prelate on this subject.

* St. Francis of Sales proceeding to treat of the virtue of meekness, that virtue which was so dear to him, and of which he exhibited such distinguished instances during life, remarks in the first place, that it is the leading virtue which Christ principally recommended by word and example. *Learn of me,* says he, *for I am meek and humble of heart.* The reason produced by him is, that all the doctrine of our Redeemer tends to teach us our duty to God, to our neighbours and to ourselves. Humility places us in that state of submission and dependance, in which we should ever exist with respect to God; it teaches us to know ourselves; and meekness forms in our hearts those sentiments of tenderness and compassion, which we should entertain for our neighbour; and it ensures that happy tranquillity, which cannot be held in sufficient estimation. He then proceeds to observe in commendation of this Divine virtue, that it is the perfection of charity, which matures every other virtue, and is never

* Introduction. Part III: c. 8.

more excellent than when it is patient and meek. St. Bernard had made the same observation before him ; and these are indeed the two characteristic traits so essentially belonging to charity, that it may be pronounced not to be perfect, and perhaps not to exist, unless it be accompanied with meekness and patience. After the holy prelate has bestowed this commendation on meekness, he makes this virtue principally consist in restraining anger, that dreadful passion, of which the effects are so fatal, and so unworthy not only of Christians formed in the School of Christ, but of men, who are guided only by the light of reason. He refers on this subject to the advice given by Joseph to his brethren, when he dismissed them to his father's house : *Do not fall out with each other on the road* ; the holy Bishop assigns this advice as a rule of conduct. He considers this life as a road by which we have all to travel to a happy eternity ; and as we are not alone on the journey, as our fellow creatures accompany us, as we often meet, jostle each other, and occasion mutual embarrassment, he requires us to provide a considerable store of meekness, in order to repress anger, to preserve peace, and to remove every obstacle to the tranquillity of our souls. For this reason the holy prelate, fully aware that anger is rarely and with extreme difficulty indulged

without sin, forbids it absolutely and without restriction. "I tell you plainly and without exception," continues he, "do not ruffle your soul with anger, if it be possible; and admit of no pretext whatever to open the door of your heart to passion; for St. James says briefly and without any reservation, *that the anger of man does not work the justice of God.*" He then represents anger accompanied with impetuosity, with hatred, with vengeance and with fury, as a tyrant followed by his attendants, who puts reason in irons, if the expression may be allowed, who subjugates the soul, takes possession of all her powers, and employs them against herself, to torture her a thousand different ways. He then concludes with St. Augustine, from the disorders to which anger usually gives birth, that it is the safest plan to close the avenues of our hearts against this furious passion, however just and necessary it may appear, than to admit it under any pretext whatever; because if it once gains admittance, it becomes impossible to dislodge this furious enemy. "If once," says he, "it continues till night, and the sun sets upon it, which the Apostle forbids; if we have not then banished it from our hearts, and it should be suffered to turn to hatred, it is then not possible to divest our minds of it. It then acquires strength and fortifies its hold by a thou-

sand suspicions, and an infinite number of false fancies; since no person could ever be convinced that his anger was unjust. It is then better to live without anger, than to expect to yield to it with discretion and moderation. Accordingly whenever from weakness and imperfection, we feel ourselves surprised with its emotions, it is safer to repel them with promptitude, than to make a compromise with passion. In fact, by the least indulgence, passion obtains possession of the fortress, and imitates the serpent, which easily gains admittance with its whole body, wherever it can place its head."

But as all the efforts we can make to overcome anger, frequently contribute to exasperate the evil, he requires us to have recourse to God in imitation of the Apostles, when the storm threatened them with destruction; He calms our passions no less than the winds and the sea; and it demands no less power than His to still the tempests which anger usually raises in our souls. Whether we employ the help of prayer, or whatever plan we adopt, the holy prelate furnishes an article of important advice, founded on experience. We are to treat this passion with great meekness; to employ violence in suppressing it, would be a direct means to inflame the disorder; "and this," says he, "is ever to be attended to in all remedies against

this evil." However as it becomes extremely difficult, whatever precaution we may take, not to be sometimes surprised by a passion, which the least provocation is capable of exciting, he requires us to repair the faults into which passion may inadvertently lead us, by some act of meekness to be instantly performed towards those who may have been the objects of our anger. "In fact," continues he, "as it is a sovereign remedy against the habit of telling lies, to correct any violation of truth as soon as we perceive it; in the same manner it is an excellent method, in order to subdue anger, to repair the evil by an instantaneous act of meekness; for, as it is generally observed, fresh wounds are most easily healed." He likewise directs us, when we are in a state of tranquillity, and have no subject of agitation, to form very serious reflections on the disorders which arise from anger; to examine the evil on the worst side; to convince our own minds of the opposition which it raises to the meekness and patience so much recommended by Christ; to make a great store of patience, and to accustom ourselves to speak and act with meekness. He carries his precautions so far on the subject of this virtue, that he does not allow the Christian to speak of the injuries he has received, and by no means to make any complaint. The reasons assigned for this conduct are, that as self-love never fails to mag-

nify them, we never speak of them in a tone of moderation; that our complaints are not restrained within bounds; that they heat our imaginations, and by enlarging a slight grievance, they lead us to resolutions which are violent, and altogether incompatible with the meekness of a disciple of Christ; that generally, instead of making our complaints to persons of a mild disposition, we communicate them to those of impetuous characters, who either by their dispositions, or some secret interest, are inclined to proceed to extremes. He adds an advice of the highest importance to the great, that they should complain with less facility than others; because by complaints they rouse themselves to a state of irritation; and as they possess more ample means of revenge, they often proceed to extremities for things, which passion has magnified, and which by no means justify their hasty view of the case. He contends, that they cannot be too much on their guard against the flatterers by whom they are surrounded; that such persons perpetually devoted to mean projects, never fail to adopt their sentiments, and to foment their anger by specious reasons; an event which takes place, when those who complain, are in a state of prosperity. On those occasions the flatterer, who is actuated by envy, labours to destroy a rival by increasing in

the heart of a Prince a share of rising anger, which perhaps would have evaporated of itself.

After these directions, as there are unquestionably occasions, when it is lawful and even becomes a duty to complain, in such cases the holy prelate permits it when the necessity of the step is apparent; but then it is to be done in a style of meekness and simplicity, without any exaggeration, without the addition of any circumstance that may satisfy passion, or tend to excite the pity of others. In this manner the holy prelate, having received intelligence that the resentment of the Duke of Nemours had been roused by calumny against him and his family, addressed to this Prince a letter of complaint, but in a tone so mild and moderate, that he discovered not the smallest share of displeasure against the persons who had abused the credulity of the Duke. In the mean time, from an impression that by an address even of that gentle description, he had yielded too far to the sentiments of nature, he wrote another about the same time to a friend, expressing repentance for his proceeding; in this letter he declares, that in future he is determined to abandon himself to Divine Providence, to conform his wishes to the will of God, and to leave to Him without reserve, the care of his honour and his reputation. Agreeably to this resolution, when one of his friends

reproached him with suffering calumny to pass without reply, and with sustaining so ill the character of a Bishop, he gave this beautiful answer, which so strongly shews his incomparable meekness: "silence is a better defence, than any thing I could offer; and would you have me to lose in a quarter of an hour, the small share of meekness, which I have been labouring to acquire for twenty-two years." This admirable meekness of the holy prelate did not lead him, as some have imagined, to a weak condescension; he was firm, steady, generous when duty demanded that conduct; but he knew how to unite firmness with mildness; a quality extremely uncommon; and hence we are often doomed to witness an obstinate inflexibility instead of episcopal steadiness. This induced him to say: "that we must in truth resist evil, and steadily and generously check the vices of those under our charge; but this must be done sweetly and peaceably."

XX.

Continuation of the same subject. Of true and false meekness; concerning the meekness which we are to shew towards ourselves.

All that has hitherto been said on the subject of meekness, appears only to regard our conduct towards our neighbour; and many are induced to

think, that this virtue extends no farther. The holy prelate was not of this sentiment; he certainly requires meekness towards our neighbour, but he likewise demands meekness towards ourselves. "One of the good practices of meekness," says the holy Bishop, "respects ourselves, and consists in not entertaining a restless uneasiness towards ourselves, our defects and imperfections; for though reason directs us when we commit faults, to conceive a displeasure for them, we are to forbear every sentiment of disgust, of uneasiness and bitterness; in this respect many are deficient, who having yielded to anger, are then angry with themselves at the circumstance, are uneasy that they indulged in uneasiness, and betray resentment for having cherished resentment." He asserts that this is a direct method of encouraging anger. In fact, though it appears that the second sally of anger destroys the first, it only changes its object; if we are angry with ourselves or with others, we certainly indulge passion, and anger is ever found an ineffectual remedy to remove anger. He adds very justly, that these gusts of anger, of resentment and of bitterness, which we conceive for ourselves, originate in pride and self-love, which feels trouble and disquietude at the sight of our imperfections and weaknesses, and that the shame of frequent relapses into sin, often arises more from a secret vanity concealed in the centre of the heart,

than from a sincere regret of having offended God. "We must then," continues he, "conceive a true displeasure for our faults, a displeasure at once firm, constant, but tranquil, sweet and peaceable. For in the same manner as a judge performs his duty towards the criminal with more effect, when he gives sentence with a rational and tranquil mind, than when he proceeds with passion and impetuosity, because in this latter situation he punishes not the crime according to the degree of malice which it implies, but agreeably to his own disturbed fancy; so we correct ourselves more effectually by a steady and tranquil repentance, than by a repentance arising from bitterness, eagerness and anger, because this impetuosity of mind is not suited to the nature of our faults, but to our inclinations."

The holy prelate however acknowledges, that there are some dispositions of so obstinate and indocile a cast, in which are observed to grow inclinations so violent, and habits so strong and inveterate, that they are to be overcome only by considerable severity towards one's self. This plan must then be adopted; but he directs us to recur to a sweet and holy confidence in God, in imitation of the holy prophet, who after having afflicted his soul by self-reproach, which he employed after each relapse, then encouraged it with meekness;

why are thou sorrowful, O my soul, and why dost thou trouble me? Hope in God, for I will still bless Him as my salvation and my God. “Rouse up your heart,” continues he, “with great meekness, whenever it shall fall, humbling yourself greatly before God, by the knowledge of your misery, without any surprise at your faults, as it is not a subject of wonder, that infirmity should be infirm, that weakness should be weak, and that misery should be contemptible. Detest however, with all your power, the offence which God has received from you, and with great courage and perfect reliance on His mercy, resume the exercise of the virtue which you have abandoned.”

The holy prelate likewise acknowledges, that there are too kinds of meekness, one true, and the other false; one which is but apparent, the other which is real and substantial; one which consists in words, the other which resides in the heart. He blamed the first as much as he esteemed the other. “Affected expressions of meekness,” says the Bishop of Belley, “were always suspected by the holy prelate.” “Affectation,” would he say, “and a certain exquisite nicety, are cousin Germans, perhaps more nearly related, and rarely separated from each other; and the last seldom exists without some sort of duplicity.” “The holy prelate,” continues he, always had milk and

honey under his tongue." * * * * He says not on his tongue, as if meekness existed only on his lips, but under his tongue, in order to express, that it proceeded from the breast and the heart, and that he uttered the impressions which he felt. "The words of true meekness," adds he, "are plain, frank, simple, sincere, and yet are tender. But the expressions of false meekness carry flattery to excess; and under these leaves is concealed the serpent of a bad intention. * * * * When the treacherous disciple was willing to sell our Lord; he gave a kiss with these words, Hail Master; and Joab killed Amaza while he was complimenting him as a friend. The unfaithful spouse caresses her husband, in proportion to her infidelity, in order to remove all suspicion of jealousy, by these false demonstrations of friendship." There is besides, according to the holy prelate, another point of difference between true and false meekness; for the latter tolerates even the greatest defects without reproof; it is weak, timid and prone to flattery; true meekness on the contrary is strong and generous; this made the holy prelate say, that "we are to resist evil, and to check steadily and generously the vices of those under our charge." But agreeably to his principles, this firmness and this steadiness ought not to proceed from passion, from haughtiness, from pride and caprice, but from meekness which is firm, steady

and generous, when necessity demands it ; and this induced him to add, " that it is necessary to reprove steadily and generously, but still in a meek and peaceable manner." This is a true portrait of the meekness of the holy prelate ; his meekness was matchless ; but nothing exceeded the firmness and generosity, which he betrayed on proper occasions. Equally remote from the harshness which pardons nothing, and from the weak condescension which excuses all things ; he considered, says the Bishop of Belley, this maxim of the wise-man, as an excellent principle : *The wounds of a friend are better and more desirable, than the deceitful salutations of a flatterer.* And he said often with the Royal prophet : *The just man will reprove me, and I shall consider him in mercy ; I will not have the oil of the sinner to come and soil my head ;* or as he understood the words, I desire not that flattery should steal through my ears into my heart, to poison it by vanity and presumption. He invariably treated others, as he wished to be treated himself ; ever humble in his deportment, ever meek, an enemy to flattery. This led Henry IV. that incomparable Prince to say, *that he loved him because he had never flattered him.* To the same purport the Mother de Chantal, after declaring, that he was the refuge, the succour and support of all the afflicted ; that never was a heart so mild, so humble, so gracious and so affable as his, fails not

to observe, that he was possessed of a soul, in the highest degree generous and intrepid in supporting danger, and in pursuing the enterprises which God suggested. To be mild, affable, compassionate, and at the same time to be bold, firm, generous and steady, are thus proved to be characters by no means incompatible; virtues and their opposite vices, are not found to be allied together; these virtues under due regulation are properly adjusted; one excludes not the other; but this combination presupposes a mind well formed, and a noble heart; qualities, which every one is not observed to possess. Virtue as it is possessed by a great proportion of mankind, may be pronounced to be constitutional; but when the various virtues are the effects of grace, when charity combines them, nothing is more in unison than the various virtues, even such as appear to be opposed to each other. Let it not therefore be asserted, that the extreme mildness of St. Francis of Sales, ever rendered him too indulgent towards persons in the world and to sinners, and induced him to relax the severity of the Gospel. He observed its precepts with too scrupulous exactness ever to dispense with them in others; mildness which should be carried to such a length, would not be entitled to the appellation of virtue; and if the holy Bishop of Geneva had been thus led to prostitute his ministry, the Church, which is ever animated with

the same spirit, would not have acknowledged him during his life and after his death, as one of the most distinguished prelates that ever graced her annals.

XXI.

Of Law-suits; how much they are opposed to the Spirit of the Gospel; how much, according to St. Francis of Sales, they are to be avoided.

As law-suits, far from re-establishing peace among mankind, serve only to inflame hatred, animosity and vengeance, and as in fact there is nothing more destructive of the charity and meekness so strongly recommended by our Redeemer, the holy prelate constantly diverted from them all whom he directed, and who regulated their conduct by his sentiments. When he was enabled to foresee them, he waited not till his advice was solicited; he spontaneously interposed, and spared no pains to eradicate from the heart the seeds of avarice and resentment, which ever prove the fatal sources of those dissensions, that often arise among persons, connected by the ties of blood. This induced him to write in a tone of considerable energy to a young lady, who had placed herself under his direction, and yet had undertaken a suit. "How long," did he say, "do you aim at any other victories over the world, than those

which our Redeemer has gained? How did our blessed Lord treat the world? It is true, my child, that He was the master of the world; but did He plead, in order to have a place, in which He might repose His head? He received innumerable outrages; but what suit did He ever undertake in His defence? Before what tribunal did He summon any person to appear? He did not even appeal to God against the Jews, who crucified Him; on the contrary, he sued for mercy in their favour?" To this example of Jesus Christ, which indeed ought to be a rule to all those who regard Him, as the model by which they are to be formed, he adds His doctrine, and His express prohibition to recur to legal procedures, even to defend property which may be unjustly seized. "This," says the holy prelate, "is what He wished us to understand by those words: *and if a man will go to law with thee, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also.* I am by no means superstitious," continues he, "and I blame not those who plead, provided it be done in truth, in justice and judgment. But I contend, * * * (and I strongly press this admonition, which I would seal with my blood if it were necessary) that whoever wishes to be perfect, and to all intents and purpose a child of Jesus Christ crucified, ought to practice this doctrine of our blessed Lord. Let the world murmur, let the prudence of the flesh

exclaim, let temporal judges invent what pretexts and subterfuges they may, this injunction ought to be preferred to all earthly prudence: *and if a man will go to law with thee, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also.*" To the authority of Jesus Christ he joins that of St. Paul, who may be justly styled the first and most excellent interpreter of the Gospel. In the first place he recites the passage from the first Epistle to Timothy, where St. Paul, exhorting Christians to be satisfied with necessities, removes the occasion of a considerable number of law-suits: *But having food, and wherewith to be covered, with these we are content.* He then refers to the passage from the first Epistle to the Corinthians, where the Apostle condemns in the clearest and most pointed language, all manner of legal suits. *Already indeed there is plainly a fault among you, that you have law-suits one with another. Why do you not rather take wrong? Why do you not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded?* "But what sin," continues the holy prelate, "was there in engaging in a suit? The Corinthians scandalized the infidel, who said: see how the Christians follow the injunctions of their Master! He tells them, he that will take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also; observe however, with what facility they sacrifice eternal blessings for temporal emolument."

St. Francis of Sales, makes with St. Augustine, another reflexion on these words of the Gospel ; which is, that our Redeemer does not say, whoever takes thy ring, give to him even thy collar ; both which are superfluous and may be spared ; but He speaks of the coat and of the cloak, which are necessary parts of dress. To this reflexion, he adds another on the passage of the first Epistle to the Corinthians ; that St. Paul does not speak only to Bishops, to priests, to persons retired from the world, who aspire to perfection, but to all Christians in general ; and that it is to them that he says ; *Already indeed there is plainly a fault among you, that you have law-suits one with another.* Hence he concludes, that those who owe example to others, ought with greater reason to avoid them. “ But,” continues he, “ human prudence will exclaim, to what will you lead us ? To suffer persecution ? To permit ourselves to be exposed to scorn, to be stripped, to be plundered without saying a word ? Yes, undoubtedly, that is my wish, or rather not mine, but that of Jesus Christ in me. * * * The inhabitants of Babylon are not acquainted with this doctrine, but the inhabitants of Calvary reduce it to practice.” To this injunction of the holy prelate, it might be objected, that he himself had been engaged in law-suits. But independently of the circumstances, that he never engaged in such contests for his own

private interests, but for the property and rights of his church, of which he was only a depositary, and which he was obliged to support ; that when the suits were gained, he never exacted the costs, and spared no pains to regain the friendship of those, against whom he had been forced to sustain such procedures, he accuses himself of such conduct as of a great fault. “ If I have not lived,” says he, “ conformably to the advice which I give you, it has arisen from weakness and not from an erroneous opinion ; I have yielded too much to the sentiments of the world, which have engaged me in the evil that I hated.” It may be asserted, that the latter sentiments of Saints, are preferable to their first opinions ; the more they advance in perfection, the more their lights increase ; and if the example of this great Bishop appears to justify law-suits, the sentiments which we have just recorded, must totally destroy the consequences which might be drawn from his conduct.

In the remaining part of the letter, the holy prelate continues to condemn law-suits, in pointing to the disorders which they produce, the loss of time, the hatred and aversions which they occasion, the bad faith and the unjust designs to which they give birth, the vengeance and pernicious devices which they suggest, and the invincible obstinacy, which blinds the judgment, and which

often lead us to support pretensions, that we know to be unjust. If a natural uprightness of heart prevents us from proceeding to such extremities, it may safely be asserted, that these suits destroy peace of heart, and banish charity; and what gain can counterbalance such extensive loss? "What duplicity," continues the holy prelate, "what artifices, perhaps what lies and secret instances of injustice, what specious and imperceptible calumnies, are not employed in this embarrassing series of suits and procedures!" He then represents to himself all the reasons which this lady might allege to justify the necessity of law, and acknowledges that they are strong, and that it is a matter of extreme difficulty not to yield to such forcible motives. "Unquestionably," says he, "that is difficult to man, but not to the son of God, who will do it in you, if you pray earnestly for that purpose." At length after having exhorted her in the most earnest manner to terminate her suit by an accommodation, he adds, "what benedictions and spiritual graces will you not gain for your soul by this conduct; you will abound and superabound; God will bless the little which you will have left; for it is not difficult to Him to do with five barley loaves, as much as Solomon with all his magnificence."

But if it is not lawful for Christians to have recourse to law, to what purpose will it be said, were so many tribunals established for the termination of disputes? Why are there even in the Ecclesiastical State so many degrees of jurisdiction? In the first place it is certain, that St. Paul desired, that all differences might be adjusted by arbitration, without having recourse to magistrates; and this assuredly should be practised among brethren, as all Christians are justly considered. But because it is not just to abandon the good to the persecution of the wicked, because there are to be found those indocile, unjust, bold and enterprising spirits, who can never be brought to reason, nor induced to do justice to their neighbour, but by the weight of superior authority, it has ever been necessary to establish magistrates, and to supply arms to justice. Good order demanded this precaution; and as, according to St. Paul, every thing that is according to order, is from God and according to God, it is to be asserted and believed, that magistrates were established by God Himself. For which reason St. Paul adds, he who resists them, resists the ordinances of God; and that they are to be obeyed, not only from fear of punishment which disobedience might provoke, but from motives of duty and conscience.

It is not therefore strictly forbidden to have recourse to law; but it would be better to abstain from all legal proceedings whatever. It should never be attempted without absolute constraint, without previously trying every method of accommodation, without a real disposition to accept terms, whenever those who unjustly oppose our claims, are willing to accede to a compromise, without a sincere inclination to wave our rights and submit to loss, in order to purchase peace, and to preserve charity, which is the only foundation of all virtues. Even then it is not proper to employ law, according to the holy prelate, but in truth, justice and judgment. We are not to employ, in order to maintain our rights, either calumny, obloquy, falsehood, or any portion of that lawless chicanery, which prolong legal suits to an eternity; we are to make no demand, to sustain no suit which is not founded on justice, and supported by just and legitimate means. It is lawful and even it becomes a duty to give every previous information to judges; but this must be done with the sincerity of an upright heart, without the smallest intention of deceiving justice, and without employing those illicit means, which have no other tendency, than to promote corruption. It must ever be deemed a serious duty to forbear those eternal complaints against our neighbour,

those declamations so odious and so hurtful to his reputation, those instances of hatred, of secret resentment, of public and scandalous vengeance. In a word, we are never to forget that we are Christians, that we are engaged in a contest with brethren, that there is no enemy so weak who may not become formidable, that the image of this world passeth away, and that we have above a judge infinite in knowledge, in power, who is incorruptible, and who will judge our injustices, and demand an account even of an idle word. With these sentiments and these dispositions, with an exact observance of these rules, we may recur to law, if we are obliged by circumstances; but still in all cases it is better to avoid it, because nothing is comparable to peace, to union, to tranquillity of heart, to that Divine charity which should be an indissoluble band between all Christians, and which it is difficult to preserve inviolate amidst the confusion and embarrassment of law-suits. It were devoutly to be wished, that these sentiments, which are those of St. Francis of Sales, would make some impression on the minds of those, who may read the history of his life; in such a case divisions and scandals would cease, and we should hail the return of that tender and fraternal love, which in ancient times so completely united the hearts and minds of the first Christians. A less animated attention to interest, less attachment to

earthly possessions, more esteem for heavenly goods, more faith and confidence in the promises of Jesus Christ, might produce so desirable a change. To this pursuit the holy prelate during life, never failed to urge the faithful; and it is not to be doubted, that he solicits the same blessing for the Church, now before the throne of God, where he enjoys that lasting peace, which he was so anxious to establish on earth.

XXII.

Of luxury; sentiments of the holy prelate on decorum in dress.

Luxury has ever been justly considered as a vice; but a neglect of cleanliness was never deemed a virtue. The holy Bishop condemns the first with all the severity of the Gospel; but he approves of cleanliness, and recommends it to persons in the world; for to them did he address these instructions; though he blames it in no situation. Against luxury he says to those who live in the world, that they are to follow this advice of St. Peter, *your adorning let it not be the outward plating of the hair, or the wearing of gold, or the putting on of apparel; but the hidden man of the heart in the incorruptibility of a quiet and meek spirit, which is rich in the sight of God.* He requires with St. Paul, that women who possess piety, and the same may be said of men, should be clothed in a be-

coming manner, and be distinguished by the modesty of their dress. He adds that men who bestow too nice attention on this article, are justly held as effeminate, and women as vain and doubtful characters. "For," says he, "if they possess chastity, it does not appear in these trifles. It is said, that they think no harm; but I answer as I have answered on other occasions, that the devil thinks much of it." Persons by this conduct expose themselves to the censorious judgments of the world. It is rare that such expences are incurred, such great pains bestowed on dress to please the eyes of a husband, whose satisfaction however, a decent woman should be anxious solely to promote; this care may originate in no other intention; but the world will ever form a different judgment, and persons under such circumstances, must remain responsible for the evil impressions which they excite. Honour and reputation should, in the estimation of a woman, possess an ascendant over every other consideration; every thing which can inflict the least stain on that delicate article, should be studiously spared. Besides an excessive attention to dress will be found to be the source of very great temptations. Improper applications are never made to deceit women distinguished by the modesty of their dress; a judgment is formed of their hearts from their external appearance; as they are thought not to be eager to please, they are not in-

festes with temptations. Luxury in this article, on the other hand, is ever found to be alluring, attractive, and to encourage boldness; those who avoid not danger, will often find it without the labour of the search. Timid virtue is invariably studious to avoid the public eye; and the enemy of our salvation fails not to embrace the slightest occasions which we supply to effect our ruin. This is the meaning of that sentiment of the holy prelate: "It is said, that they think no harm; but I answer, as I have answered on other occasions, that the devil thinks much of it." What the holy prelate says of luxury in dress, he applies to that which regards the table, equipages and furniture. Christian charity does not permit us to incur so many superfluous expences, while the poor, who are our brethren, are in want of necessities, and often perishing by hunger. With what face can a Christian see Jesus Christ enduring in His members the most shameful privation, while a number of useless valets, and what is worse, even inanimate walls are superbly decorated? Is it not on such occasions that we are led to say with St. Augustine, that those who relieve not the poor, become their murderers? *Non pavisti? occidisti.* The holy prelate however acknowledges with St. Lewis, whom he cites, that each one's condition in life should regulate his expences. There are expences allowed to Kings, to Princes, to persons distin-

guished by their birth and their rank, which are by no means proper for private persons, who have no other distinction in the world, but that which is obtained by riches, often ill acquired. He even allows that in this particular, regard may be paid to age; that much may be tolerated in young people, which cannot be permitted to aged persons, to married women and widows; but in every state, in every age and condition of life, that superfluity be avoided, and that Christian modesty be ever kept in view. Such are the sentiments of this great Bishop on the article of luxury.

As to cleanliness, he gives it great commendation, and strongly recommends its practice; he even asserts that the exterior is a mark of a well regulated mind, and a picture of interior decency; he observes that God demands corporal cleanliness from those who approach to the altar, and who are in a manner the guardians of piety. He maintains, that it is a mark of contempt towards those with whom we converse, to appear in a mean and disgusting dress. But in recommending cleanliness, he requires us to avoid all affectation, and all vain and superfluous curiosity; which serves only to satisfy vanity. "Keep yourself," says he, "as much as possible in a simple and modest attire. This mode is undoubtedly the greatest ornament of beauty, and the best excuse for deformity."

The holy prelate was scrupulously exact in forbidding those under his direction, the use of all superfluous articles of dress. It may be here recollected, what passed between him and Madam de Chantal on this subject, the first days he saw her. "One day," says the author of his life in an abridged form, "the holy Bishop seeing her decorated rather more than usual, said to her: Madam would your dress be less becoming, if you had no lace to your hood, nor buttons to your handkerchief? The holy widow immediately cut off the buttons, and unsewed the lace." These remarks may appear trifling; but they clearly shew, how much the holy prelate was averse to luxury, and even to all superfluity in dress. It may be pronounced in general, that the same principle may be applied to dress and to language. In one and the other we are to shun affectation, not to be enslaved to novelty or to fashion, not to seek for improvements, nor to advance before others, and never pertinaciously to depart from the greater number, but to adhere exactly to the rules of modesty. Singularity was ever deemed a bad trait in a character; it is to be avoided with peculiar care in every thing open to public inspection. St. Lewis, cited by St. Francis of Sales, gave an excellent rule on this subject. It is necessary, said he, that every one should cultivate dress according to his condition, that the good and the discreet may not say, you

do too much; nor the young, that you do too little. But if the youthful part of your acquaintance should not be satisfied with decorum, you are to adhere to the opinion of the discreet. The holy prelate was not only exact in forbidding luxury and superfluity in others, he gave himself an example of modesty, which he perpetually observed with scrupulous fidelity. Independently of the account we have given in his life of the frugality of his table, of the modesty which prevailed in his furniture and dress, and of his rejection of every kind of equipage, it appears from one of his letters, written in confidence to a virtuous lady, that from the time he had quitted the world to embrace the Ecclesiastical State, he had worn but common stockings and plain gloves, and that he had forbidden himself the use even of gilt paper. After this statement, is it not a subject of astonishment, that some have had the boldness to charge this holy Bishop, with too much indulgence for luxury, and that those, who at this day are partial to this kind of indulgence, should boast of following his maxims? It is not necessary to attempt a justification of his sentiments on the subject, after the more able efforts of others. It will be sufficient to refer to the sentiments, which have been here recorded; let them be impartially examined, and it will demonstratively appear, that more holy and more rational rules on

the subject of dress, could not possibly be proposed to persons in the world.

XXIII.

Of the diversions which are permitted and are forbidden; sentiments of the holy prelate on gaming. Rules for persons in the world.

As there may be irregularity in the choice of diversions, in the time which is given to them; and in the affection, or rather the passion, with which they are pursued; it is certain, on the other side, agreeably to the holy prelate, that it is faulty to carry severity and rigour to such a length, as to take no sort of recreation, nor permit to others any kind of amusement. He therefore acknowledges, that it is necessary to give some indulgence to the mind and to the body, and that they stand in need of innocent relaxation, to prevent them from sinking under labour. Both one and the other are ever to be regarded as enemies who are to be distrusted, and to be perpetually watched; but who are not to be overpowered, particularly if they are exerted in a proper manner, and, as St. Paul expresses it, are not made instruments subservient to iniquity. The holy prelate supports this sentiment by the principles of reason, which admit it, and then by the example of St. John the Evangelist, as recorded in Ecclesiastical history. It is there related

that this great Apostle was one day met by a sportsman, holding in his hand a partridge, with which he appeared amused. It is therefore permitted sometimes to enjoy recreation; and on this subject the holy Bishop observes, that there are diversions so proper and so lawful, that to have recourse to them in a suitable manner, nothing more is requisite than the common prudence which assigns order, time, place and measure, to every circumstance of life. He produces as instances of these proper and lawful diversions, walking, conversation, the chase, the use of musical instruments. But however innocent these amusements may be, he requires that they constitute not our occupations, that too much time be not given to them, that they be not pursued with passion, and they do not engage us to neglect the obligations of our state; and this is what he means, when he asserts that prudence is to regulate the time and place, and to fix the limits to which they are to be confined. The holy prelate likewise admits of other amusements; and these, says he, are the relaxations in which gain becomes the recompence of skill either in body or mind, such as tennis, ball and chess: he says of these relaxations, that they are good and lawful, provided all excess be avoided, either in the time given to them, or the sum of money which lies at stake. "For," says he, "if too much time should be allotted to these di-

versions, it is no longer an amusement, but an occupation; it becomes not a method of alleviating the body and mind, but of deadening and of overpowering both. If the stake should be too great, besides the danger of diminishing friendship among the players, it is always unjust to stake a considerable sum on skill so unimportant and so useless, as that which is displayed in play." He then exhorts the good Christian above all things, not to entertain a passion for sports; because however innocent the diversion may be, it is always faulty to place our affections on such objects. "I say not," continues he, "that we are not to take pleasure in play while we are engaged in it; for otherwise it would prove no relaxation; but I maintain, that we are to conceive no passion, nor fix our minds on it with eagerness."

As to games of hazard, such as those of dice and cards, that is, games in which the gain depends on chance, St. Francis of Sales condemns them without reserve and without restriction. "They are," says he, "not only dangerous," but of their own nature bad and censurable; accordingly they are forbidden both by the Civil and Ecclesiastical laws." The holy prelate proves the injustice of these games by three reasons. The first is, that in these games gain devolves not to skill but to chance, which often favours him who

had no grounds to expect success by another way; and in this, reason and justice are violated. "You will object to me," continues he, "that you are agreed on that article." "That is sufficient," says he, "to shew, that he who gains, does no injury to others; but it does not follow, that the agreement is just and reasonable, nor by consequence that the game is so; for gain, which ought to be the price of skill, is become the recompence of chance, which merits no reward, since it depends not on you." The second reason assigned by the holy prelate is, that diversions ought to afford amusement, but that games of hazard are not of this description, but violent occupations. He describes on this occasion in glowing colours, the studied eagerness of players, the agitation of their spirits, their disquietudes, their incessant earnestness, their fears, their impetuous sallies, their capricious humours, the great loss of their time, their fury, their oaths, their blasphemies, their injustices, the consequent ruin and desolation of the best established houses, their children deprived of education, their servants of care, the poor of assistance, the most legitimate debts left unpaid, the most essential duties unsatisfied, and the most fatal disorders resorted to, in order to supply resources for play, and to foment this dreadful propensity. Here it may be asked, if Christians, or even rational creatures

can be permitted to expose themselves to such dreadful consequences? And ought we not to conclude, that if games of hazard were less unjust than they are proved to be, they should even then be avoided, from an apprehension of such fatal effects? Finally the holy prelate asserts, that in these games the winners only rejoice, and that this joy is unjust, as it exists only by the loss, the displeasure, the rage and despair of the other party. To strengthen his sentiment, he produces the authority of St. Lewis. This great King being informed, that his brother, the Count of Anjou, was playing at dice in his apartments, rose instantly from his bed in a sick and feeble state, and repaired to the room; having reproved him with considerable energy, he took the dice and the tables, with a part of the money, and threw them into the sea. What would have been the conduct of this holy King, if he had seen the excesses of the present period? What measures would his zeal have suggested, to arrest the course of this fatal disorder? Here we might speak of the sentiments of St. Francis of Sales, on the subject of dances and balls; but this question has been so often discussed by persons equally distinguished in the Church by their rank and their learning, that any observations in this place, would only be tedious repetitions of what they have treated at greater length. Besides they have so

completely justified him on the charge of relaxation, which has been urged on these two important points of Christian morality, that we might weaken their arguments by presenting them in an abridged form. We have therefore nothing farther to perform, than to express our earnest wishes, that his accusers, instead of censuring and combating his doctrine, may have the goodness to obtain perfect information on the subject. They will find his precepts perfectly conformable to the Gospel, reasonable, exact, founded on long experience, and equally distinguished by piety, by unction and by light.

THE END.

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